NATION

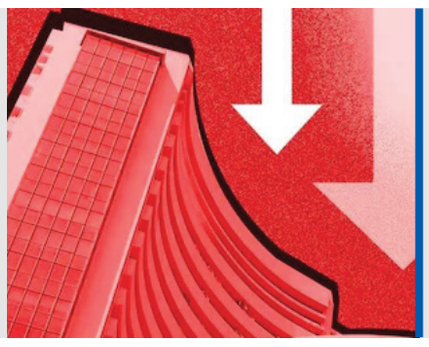
Inundation woes persist as rains batter TN districts

≫ Page: 4 ≪

BUSINESS

ITC, VST Industries shares decline amid GST hike report

≫ Page: 7 ≪



SPORTS

Cook praises India for being brave in BGT opener

≫ Page: 8 ≪

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DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

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Over 160 protesting farmers arrested in Noida

NOIDA, 3 DEC

Police on Tuesday arrested more than 160 protesting farmers, including the president of Bharatiya Kisan Parishad Sukhbir Yadav 'Khalifa', who were holding a sit-in at the 'Dalit Prerna Sthal' in Noida after their march to Delhi on land compensation and other demands was stopped a day earlier.

The protesters, who had gathered in Gautam Buddh Nagar from different parts of Uttar Pradesh on Monday on the call of Samyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM), had threatened to resume their march to the national capital if their demands were not met within a week.

Condemning the police action, the SKM said it was a violation of the constitutional rights for peaceful protest and urged the judiciary to intervene.

The SKM alleged that the police "had violated the consensus reached with the farmers' leadership on 2 December, asking for seven days to allow the "Chief Secretary of Uttar Pradesh to discuss and resolve the demands".

Among the arrested were women and several farmer leaders like Khalifa and Pawan Khatana the state president of Bharatiya Kisan Union (Western Uttar Pradesh), according to the police.

Khalifa told PTI on phone that they will continue to fight for their "just demands".

Slamming the arrests, the Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKU) convened an "emergency" panchayat over the matter at the Kisan Bhavan in Sisauli village of Muzaffarnagar where it decided to amplify the protest on Wednesday. "It was decided in the Panchayat that BKU workers from the five divisions of Uttar Pradesh, which include Meerut, Saharanpur, Aligarh, Agra, Moradabad -- will reach the 'Zero Point' in Gautam Buddha Nagar while peaceful dharna would be observed across all other districts in their respective police stations," BKU's youth wing president of Uttar Pradesh Anuj Singh told PTI. Zero Point refers to a location at the convergence point of the Noida-Greater Noida Expressway and the Yamuna Expressway in Gautam Buddh Nagar district's Greater Noida city. *—PTI*

Police detain farmers agitating at Dalit Prema Sthal, in Noida
PHOTO: PTI

Bangladesh summons Indian envoy after Consulate attack

B'desh suspends services in Agartala mission over 'security' issue

DHAKA/AGARTALA, 3 DEC

Bangladesh on Tuesday summoned the Indian envoy to its Foreign Office while announcing the suspension of visa and consular services at its mission in Agartala, a day after the premises were breached by protesters over the arrest of a Hindu monk in the neighbouring country.

There was drama too at a court in Chattogram, where monk Chinmoy Krishna Das' bail plea was to be heard. But no lawyer appeared for him, and his supporters later claimed that his advocates are under threat.

Tuesday's developments marked another low in ties between the two countries following the ouster of Sheikh Hasina as prime minister in August. India has been expressing concern over Hindus and other minorities being targeted in Bangladesh under the interim government of Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus.

The issue also figured in Indian Parliament Tuesday and the British House of Commons a day earlier. New Delhi earlier called the breach at the Agartala mission "deeply regrettable". Tripura Police said seven people have been arrested and action taken against four policemen over the incident. Bangladesh had said its flag was desecrated.

Emerging from the meeting with acting Bangladesh foreign secretary Riaz Hamidullah in Dhaka, Indian envoy Pranay Verma said Delhi wanted to build a "constant stable, constructive relationship" and no single issue should stand as a barrier to bilateral ties. Earlier, Law Affairs Adviser Asif Nazrul asked India to reassess its ties with Bangladesh after Hasina's ouster. *—PTI*

>>>More on Pages 3 & 6

Protest in Bangladesh's Dhaka after a group of Hindus in Agartala stormed a consulate office of Bangladesh
PHOTO: PTI

Plea in Bangladesh HC seeks ban on Indian TV channels

DHAKA, 3 DEC

A writ petition has been filed in the Bangladesh High Court seeking a ban on the broadcast of all Indian TV channels in the country citing provocative news aired on them, according to a media report.

Lawyer Ekhlas Uddin Bhuiyan filed the petition and confirmed the matter on Monday, the Dhaka Tribune reported.

The writ calls for a ban on channels like Star Jalsha, Star Plus, Zee Bangla, Republic Bangla, and all other Indian TV channels, the report added. *—PTI*

AHEAD OF CEREMONY

Shinde to take oath as DyCM, visits hospital for check-up

MUMBAI, 3 DEC

Maharashtra's caretaker Chief Minister Eknath Shinde will take oath as Deputy Chief Minsiter on Wednseady.

In a surprising volte-face, Shinde agreed to serve as Deputy Chief Minister in the incoming Mahayuti government after days of hectic parleys, sources said.

He visited a private hospital in Thane on Tueday for a routine check-up, day before a new CM is sworn in at an open ground ceremony in south Mumbai.

Shinde was back at Varsha, the CM's official residence in the posh Malabar Hill area within a couple of hours of his visit to the Jupiter Hospital.

A doctor at the hospital said Shinde had throat issues. "The CM had fever and infection, which caused weakness. He also underwent an MRI scan as a precautionary measure," the doctor said.

His aides, however, said he was not well and put it down to the exertion during the campaign for the last month's Maharashtra assembly elections. He also met Devendra Fadnavis at his residence in Mumbai in a bid to end the ongoing deadlock within the Mahayuti alliance over the top post.

This is the first meeting between Fadnavis and Shinde ever since the standoff on government formation began.

According to sources, BJP's Devendra Fadnavis is poised to return as Chief Minister. Shinde will be sworn in alongside Fadnavis and NCP leader Ajit Pawar at a high-profile oath-taking ceremony in Mumbai on 4 December. *—PTI*

>>>More on Page 3

Eknath Shinde ***PHOTO: PTI***

WORLD DISABILITY DAY

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah helps a man fix an artificial limb during the inauguration of World Disability Day at Sree Kanteerava Stadium in Bengaluru on Tuesday. ***PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD***

LS clears bill for 4 nominees in bank a/cs

NEW DELHI, 3 DEC

Lok Sabha on Tuedsya passed the Banking Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2024, which allows bank account holders to have up to four nominees in their accounts.

Another proposed change relates to redefining 'substantial interest' for directorships, which could increase to Rs 2 crore instead of the current limit of Rs 5 lakh, which was fixed almost six decades ago.

The bill proposes to increase the tenure of directors (excluding the chairman and whole-time director) in cooperative banks from 8 years to 10 years, so as to align with the Constitution (Ninety-Seventh Amendment) Act, 2011.

Once passed, the bill would allow a director of a Central Cooperative Bank to serve on the board of a State Cooperative Bank. Meanwhile, the Rajya Sabha on Tuesday took up a bill which seeks to remove redundancies and replace the 90-year-old Aircraft Act to boost ease of doing business to attract investments in the aviation sector. Bharatiya Vayuyan Vidheyak, 2024, was passed in the Lok Sabha in the last session of Parliament.

EAM lists 3 rules for China

India said it was committed to staying engaged with China to find a fair and mutually acceptable settlement of the boundary issue, but the relations will be contingent upon strictly respecting the sanctity of the LAC and following pacts on border management, with no attempt to unilaterally alter the status quo.

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar told the Lok Sabha on Tuesday that the disengagement of troops has been achieved in "full" in eastern Ladakh through a step-by-step process, culminating in Depsang and Demchok, and India now expects the commencement of talks on remaining issues that it had placed on the agenda. India was and it continues to be very clear that the three key principles must be observed in all circumstances, he said. *—PTI*

>>>More on Page 3

Opposition MPs protest during the Winter session of Parliament, in New Delhi, on Tuesday. INDIA bloc faced a setback on Tuesday as key allies SP and TMC were absent from the protest ***PHOTO: PTI***

US approves $1.17B chopper sale to India

WASHINGTON, 3 DEC

The Biden Administration on Monday notified the Congress of its decision to approve the sale of MH-60R Multi-Mission Helicopter Equipment and related ones at an estimated cost of USD1.17 billion.

The proposed sale will improve India's capability to deter current and future threats by upgrading its anti-submarine warfare capabilities, the Defense Security Cooperation Agency said in a notification to the Congress.

The Biden administration's approval of sale of major defense equipment to India comes weeks ahead of its completion of its four-year term.

President-elect Donald Trump would be sworn in as 47th president of the United States of America on 20 January, 2025.

According to the notification, India has requested to buy 30 Multifunctional Information Distribution System-Joint Tactical Radio Systems (MIDS-JTRS).It also included advanced data transfer systems; external fuel tanks; AN/AAS 44C(V) forward looking infrared (FLIR) systems; an operator machine interface assistant; spare containers; facilities study, design, construction and support; support and test equipment; munitions; and integration and test support. The principal contractor will be Lockheed Martin Rotary and Mission Systems. *—PTI*

S Korean President declares Emergency under martial law

CHENNAI, 3 DEC

South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol declared an "emergency martial law," Tuesday accusing the country's opposition of controlling the parliament, sympathising with North Korea and paralysing the government with anti-state activities. Yoon made the announcement in a televised briefing, vowing to "eradicate pro-North Korean forces and protect the constitutional democratic order." It wasn't immediately clear how Yoon's step would affect the country's governance and democracy. *—PTI*

TARGET PVT COLLEGES

KEA staff, 9 others arrested in engineering seat blocking scam

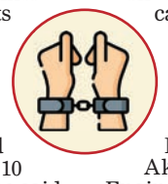
BENGALURU, 3 DEC

A staff member of the Karnataka Examinations Authority (KEA) is among 10 people arrested in an engineering seat-blocking scam, police said on Tuesday.

According to police, the matter came to light on 3 November when KEA officials lodged a complaint at the Malleswaram police station, reporting a suspected seat-blocking scheme during the 2024–2025 undergraduate engineering admissions.

A senior police officer said the interrogation of three private engineering college managers provided leads into the scam. The arrests were made over a period of time, with the latest three suspects apprehended on Monday. They were produced in court and have been remanded to 10 days of police custody, he said.

According to the FIR, unauthorised persons obtained login IDs and passwords from 52 engineering candidates, who had no intention of taking seats, and made option entries on their behalf, posing as candidates.



In a statement, police alleged that the accused blocked engineering seats under the government quota at BMS Engineering College, Akash Institute of Engineering and Technology and New Horizon College of Engineering. *—PTI*

LeT terrorist gunned down in Srinagar

SRINAGAR, 3 DEC

A Lashkar-e-Taiba terrorist, alleged to be the mastermind of the 20 October attack in central Kashmir that left seven people dead, was killed in an encounter with security forces in the Dachigam forest area on Tuesday.

The terrorist of the banned Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) was identified as Junaid Ahmed Bhat. He was involved in other crimes, including shooting at non-locals in south Kashmir last year, officials said.

The 20 October strike along with a Pakistani terrorist near in Gagangir, a place close to tourist spot Sonamarg, resulted in the deaths of a local doctor and six others. Following the attack, Bhat was listed as a "Category A" terrorist, marking him as most wanted.

Bhat, a resident of Koimoh in Kulgam district, had gone missing last year, with intelligence agencies confirming his affiliation with the banned terror group. Meanwhile, the body of a village defence guard (VDG) with a bullet wound was found in Udhampur district of Jammu and Kashmir a day after he went missing, police said on Tuesday. The post-mortem report revealed that he was shot in the abdomen and the bullet was fired from his rifle, an officer said. *—PTI*

Toll gate staff assaulted in Talapady

MANGALURU, 3 DEC

A group of people travelling in a car allegedly assaulted the staff at the Talapady toll gate, following an altercation over evading the toll fee, police said on Tuesday. The incident, which occurred late Sunday night, was captured on CCTV, and efforts are underway to apprehend all suspects involved, they added. According to police, five men travelling in a car registered in Uttar Pradesh attempted to evade the toll fee while heading to Kerala from Mangaluru. When a staff member from IGS, the toll management company, tried to stop them, they stopped the car, confronted the staff, and allegedly attacked them. Toll employees Manu, Sudham and Aman sustained injuries and were admitted to a hospital, a senior officer said. The suspects have been identified as Zulfan, Nifan, and Fayaz, all residents of Ullal. Police have arrested Zulfan, and a search is on to trace the other two, the officer said. *—PTI*

State to form Task Force for safety of healthcare workers

BENGALURU, 3 DEC

The government has decided to establish a District Task Force to address incidents of violence and sexual assault against doctors and healthcare workers, officials said on Tuesday. The decision was made during the first meeting of the State Task Force, chaired by Chief Secretary Shalini Rajneesh on Monday, they added. During the meeting, the Chief Secretary instructed officials to form District Task Forces, conduct regular meetings to address such incidents promptly, and submit detailed reports to the government, officials said. The Director of the Medical Education Department has been tasked with preparing protocols and standard operating procedures (SOPs) for preventing violence and sexual assault against doctors and healthcare professionals. Furthermore, Shalini Rajneesh directed hospital management to prominently display the Prohibition of Violence Against Medical Staff and Damage to Medical Establishments Act, 2009 (Karnataka Act 1 of 2009) in key areas within hospital premises, officials said. *—PTI*

Cheated of Rs 15L, college girl commits suicide

BENGALURU, 3 DEC

A 19-year-old college student was booked for allegedly abetting the suicide of his classmate in City. Priyanka B, 19, was found hanging from the balcony of her residence on 29 November. Police recovered a death note from her room in which she had blamed her classmate Diganth for taking the extreme step, accusing him of taking gold ornaments valued at Rs 15 lakh from her and failing to return them. Diganth had invested a huge amount in gambling and had lost the money, according to sources. Rajajinagar police have charged Diganth under BNS section 108 (abetment of suicide). *(Suicide is not the solution. Help is available. Please call Tele Manas at 14416, SAHAI at 080-25497777 for support.) — Salar News*

Cyclone-induced rains lash State, more likely today

Bengaluru likely to have cloudy sky with light rain today

BENGALURU, 3 DEC

Even as rains brought by Cyclone Fengal lashed Karnataka on Tuesday, particularly the coastal, Malnad and south interior regions, India Meteorological Department (IMD) predicted that the showers would continue in several parts of the State on Wednesday.

The deputy commissioners of Dakshina Kannada, Kodagu, Chamarajanagar, Udupi, Mysuru and Chikkaballapur declared holidays for schools, they said.

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) said on Tuesday that the well-marked low-pressure area over coastal Karnataka and the adjoining east-central Arabian Sea persisted at 8.30am on Tuesday. The associated cyclonic circulation was expected to move west–north-westward over the east-central Arabian Sea in the next two days, it said.

For Wednesday, the IMD has forecast a partly cloudy sky with light rain likely in Bengaluru and its surrounding areas. Maximum and minimum temperatures are expected to be around 25 degrees Celsius and 20 degrees Celsius, respectively.

Parts of Bengaluru, including Vidhana Soudha, received light showers on Tuesday *PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD*

The IMD has warned of isolated heavy rains over Dakshina Kannada, Udupi and Chikkamagaluru districts. Light to moderate rain is likely at most places over Uttara Kannada and at a few places over Gadag, Haveri, Raichur, Yadgir, Dharwad, Kodagu, Hassan, Shivamogga, Mysuru, Mandya, Chitradurga and Ballari districts.

Light rain is also expected at many places over the remaining districts of south interior Karnataka and at a few places over the remaining districts of north interior Karnataka.

Since squally weather with wind speeds of 35 to 45 km/h, gusting to 55 km/h is likely to prevail along the Karnataka coast, the IMD has advised fishermen not to venture into sea during this time.

According to the IMD, on 4 December, light to moderate rain is likely at many places over Dakshina Kannada, Udupi, and Uttara Kannada districts, and at isolated places over Bidar, Kalaburgi, Yadgir, Kodagu, Shivamogga, Chikkamagaluru and Chitradurga districts. *—PTI*

Hassan meet under Cong banner: DKS

BENGALURU, 3 DEC

State Congress President and Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar on Tuesday said that a mega convention scheduled for 5 December in Hassan will be organised under the party's banner and his leadership.

Initially planned as a "show of strength" event in solidarity with Chief Minister Siddaramaiah (who faces allegations in MUDA case), the convention, originally called "Siddaramaiah Swabhimaani Janandolana Samavesha," will now be named "Jana Kalyana Samavesha," according to party sources.

The convention will be held in Hassan, the home turf of former prime minister and JD(S) patriarch HD Deve Gowda.

He said, "Congress is a big party with a big history. If I want to participate as the president of the party, it should be under our banner. If the chief minister has to participate, it should be under Congress' banner. I have made it very clear, and they have agreed. Under our leadership, it is going on. I'm presiding over the meeting."

DK Shivakumar *PHOTO: X*

Addressing concerns that Siddaramaiah's loyalists were upset with this decision, Shivakumar said, "That is false. They are doing their job. No one is a Shivakumar supporter or a Siddaramaiah supporter. Everyone is a Congress supporter."

The convention was initially organised by the federation of organisations representing oppressed communities. *—PTI*

Zameer appears before Lokayukta

BENGALURU, 3 DEC

Housing and Waqf Minister BZ Zameer Ahmed Khan on Tuesday appeared before the the Lokayukta police in connection with a disproportionate assets case, sources in Lokayukta said.

According to sources, the Minister came to the Lokayukta office where he was questioned about the DA case.

While probing the IMA Ponzi scheme, the Enforcement Directorate raided and questioned Khan and got some information about the DA case, the sources said.

Zameer Ahmed Khan *PHOTO: PTI*

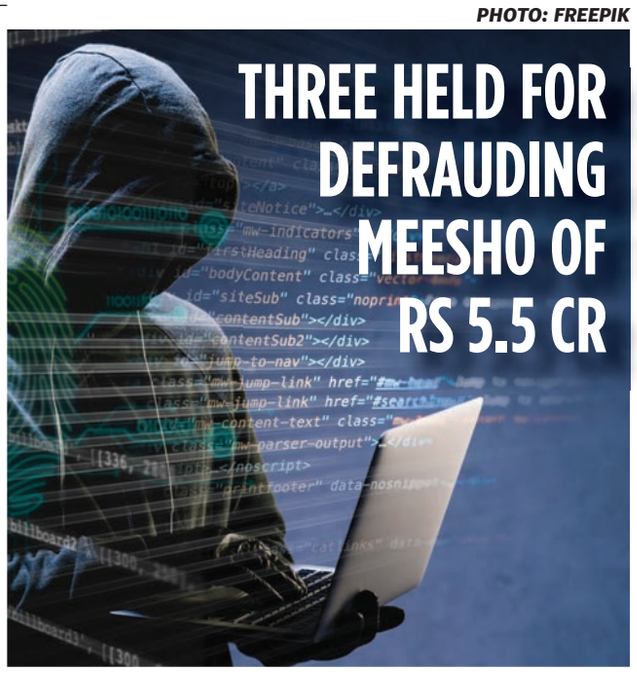
- There was a stay on investigating the DA case against Housing and Waqf Minister BZ Zameer Ahmed Khan. It was recently vacated, following which the investigation started

"The ED in turn shared the information on DA case to us since the Lokayukta handles DA cases. So, in this connection Khan was summoned," a source told PTI.

According to him, there was a stay on investigating the DA case against Khan.

It was recently vacated, following which the investigation started. *—PTI*

PHOTO: FREEPIK



BENGALURU, 3 DEC

City police have apprehended three individuals from Gujarat accused of defrauding Meesho, an online marketplace, of Rs 5.5 crore over a period of seven months.

According to police reports, the fraudsters operated under the name "Om Sai Passion" in Surat, devising a scheme to exploit Meesho's platform through fabricated customer profiles and fraudulent claims. The accused established a fictitious company, Om Sai Passion, and engaged third-party agents to execute a convoluted scam. They created bogus customer accounts and placed between 2,000 to 2,500 daily orders on Meesho. The products, falsely booked under various customer names and addresses, were fraudulently returned to a warehouse in Surat, masquerading as legitimate returns.

Meesho's nodal officer uncovered the scam, which spanned from January to July 2024, prompting a complaint to the Whitefield Cyber Crime Police Station in Bengaluru. Investigators later discovered links to a similar case involving the same individuals from 2023.

Bengaluru police have arrested the three suspects and are probing the extent of their operations, as well as the possibility of additional accomplices. Efforts to recover the siphoned funds are underway. *—Salar News*

HC quashes electoral bonds case against Kateel

BENGALURU, 3 DEC

High Court on Tuesday quashed a criminal case registered against former State BJP president Nalin Kumar Kateel for allegedly extorting money and pressuring business entities to buy electoral bonds.

Justice M Nagaprasanna passed the order while allowing the petition filed by Kateel.

The FIR was registered by the Bengaluru police based on a complaint lodged by Adarsh R Iyer, a city-based activist.

The FIR was also registered against Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, the officials of the Directorate of Enforcement (ED), office bearers of the BJP and others.

PHOTO: PTI

"The court has quashed the FIR against petitioner Kateel. We have filed a petition on behalf of Kateel," senior advocate KG Raghavan said, and added that Nirmala Sitharaman was not a petitioner. *—PTI*

Vlogger murderer tried to end life before fleeing

BENGALURU, 3 DEC

Indiranagar police have arrested the suspect involved in the murder of Assamese vlogger Maya Gogoi, aged 19, who was found dead in a service apartment in the city. The accused, Aarav Hanoy, 21, reportedly attempted to take his own life before fleeing the scene.

Maya, a native of Guwahati, was discovered on 26 November at the Royal Livings service apartment in Indiranagar. Investigations revealed that Aarav had fled the location following the incident, which occurred on 24 November. He was apprehended on 29 November.

The police disclosed that Aarav had meticulously planned the murder, suspecting that Maya had lost interest in their relationship and was spending excessive time on her mobile phone. He allegedly entered the apartment with a nylon rope and a knife, leading to the deadly confrontation.

After fatally stabbing Maya, Aarav was reportedly overcome with remorse and attempted to hang himself with the rope. Upon failing, he decided to flee. He initially escaped to Varanasi but later made his way back to Bengaluru, where he called the police control room, expressing an intention to surrender.

The couple had been in a relationship for six months after meeting on social media; however, their relationship had turned sour prior to the tragic event. Maya's body was discovered after staff entered the locked room due to a foul odour, revealing severe injuries. *—Salar News*

AMID SPECULATIONS

Yatnal camp in Delhi to meet Waqf JPC, says Jarkiholi

NEW DELHI/BENGALURU, 3 DEC

Even as the entire Basanagouda Patil Yatnal camp of Karnataka BJP has arrived in New Delhi, MLA Ramesh Jarkiholi, who is also a part of the group, on Tuesday said they were in the national capital to submit their report to the Joint Parliamentary Committee on Waqf, not for any other purpose.

Jarkiholi accused BJP state president BY Vijayendra of spreading propaganda against them and indulging in anti-party activities. "We have come here to give a representation to the JPC on Waqf when it meets on 5 December," he said.

The Gokak MLA said they have also sought time to meet BJP national president and Union Health Minister JP Nadda. "If he gives time, we will meet him," he said.

Jarkiholi's clarification came after BJP's Central Disciplinary Committee member secretary Om Pathak summoned Yatnal to meet him on Wednesday. Pathak has sought explanation from Yatnal for his tirade against the state party leadership, his defiance towards party directives and taking stances and making pronouncements against party's official position.

"Om Pathak has called Yatnal to meet him at 11.30am tomorrow (Wednesday). He will go to meet him alone. We will not go with him. I don't know where he has been asked to meet Pathak. He will give his reply tomorrow itself," Jarkiholi said.

Ramesh Jarkiholi *PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA*

Yatnal is a strong critic of BJP veteran and former chief minister BS Yediyurappa and his family, especially his son and the party's Chief BY Vijayendra. ics' of Congress effectively.

Yatnal along with a few senior BJP leaders, including MLA Ramesh Jarkiholi, Arvind Limbavali, Mahesh Kumtahalli, and Madhu Bangarappa had taken out a month-long anti-Waqf march from Bidar to Chamarajanagar. The march started on 25 November and will conclude on 25 December.

'Organisation, not differences discussed in BJP meeting'

Agenda of the meeting with BJP's national general secretary Tarun Chugh was limited to strengthening the organisation and not related to the 'small differences' in the party, the Leader of Opposition in the Karnataka Assembly R Ashoka said on Tuesday.

The meeting was initially touted as an effort to bring flocks together, especially in the backdrop of Yatnal and his team striking a dissenting note against the BJP State President BY Vijayendra and his father Yediyurappa. —PTI

Decision on film chamber's PoSH panel deferred

BENGALURU, 3 DEC

Filmmaker Kavitha Lankesh on Tuesday said a decision by the Karnataka Film Chamber of Commerce (KFCC) to form a PoSH committee headed by her to address sexual harassment complaints has been deferred.

Lankesh is the president of the Film Industry for Rights and Equality (FIRE), an organisation that fights for women's rights and against abuse in the Kannada film industry.

The KFCC had constituted a 10-member Complaints Internal Committee under the Prevention of Sexual Harassment (PoSH) Act on 1 December, said Lankesh.

"It was decided that I would be heading the committee. Now I am being told that the KFCC would convene a meeting post the election on 15 December and decide on the committee on 16 December. But people I know have told me that there was stiff opposition from some KFCC members against my appointment as the head of the committee," said Lankesh.

KFCC president NM Suresh rejected allegations of opposition to Lankesh heading the panel. He said, "I do not have the right to sign this order, as I am leaving the office." *—PTI*

BALLARI MATERNAL DEATHS

State asks DCGI to probe Ringer Lactate supplier

BENGALURU, 3 DEC

State government on Tuesday requested the Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI) to investigate and take necessary action against a West Bengal-based manufacturer, amid concerns that recent maternal deaths in Ballari district, could be linked to substandard Ringer Lactate solution supplied by the company.

In a letter, Karnataka Health Principal Secretary Harsh Gupta, drew the attention of the DCGI to the supply of several batches of "Compound Sodium Lactate I P (Ringer's Lactate IP)" by the West Bengal-based pharmaceutical company Paschim Banga Pharmaceuticals to the Karnataka State Medical Supplies Corporation Limited (KSMSCL) for distribution in government hospitals through District Drug Warehouses.

The letter emphasised that the manufacturer had been licensed by the Drugs Controller/Licensing Authority of West Bengal, which is approved by the DCGI.

According to the Health Department, between 9 and 11 November, four maternal deaths were reported at the district hospital in Ballari. It was noted that the Ringer Lactate (RL) batches supplied by the said manufacturer had just been used. The matter is under investigation.

- Between 9 and 11 November, 4 maternal deaths were reported at district hospital in Ballari. Ringer Lactate batches supplied by Paschim Banga Pharmaceuticals was used

Following the deaths, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Saturday ordered the suspension of the state drugs controller, the blacklisting of Paschim Banga Pharmaceuticals, and the prosecution of the company.

The letter also mentioned that these batches had previously been frozen for use in March 2023 by KSMSCL after two batches were found to be "Not of Standard Quality" (NSQ) by the Government Analyst at the Drugs Testing Laboratory in Karnataka.

However, when the manufacturer challenged these NSQ reports and the matter was referred to the Central Drugs Laboratory (CDL) in Kolkata by the competent court, the CDL found the batches to be of Standard Quality (SQ).

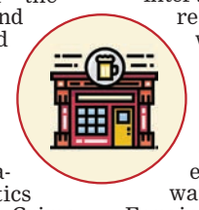
Based on a letter from KSMSCL, various batches of the drug were drawn for testing and analysis by the Drugs Control Officers across Karnataka from the District Drug Warehouses. Of these, 22 batches failed in various parameters, including tests for sterility, bacterial endotoxins, and particulate matter. Some of these NSQ samples were later found to be SQ by the CDL. *—PTI*

Police ramp up safety measure ahead of New Year

BENGALURU, 3 DEC

Ahead of New Year revelry, Bengaluru Police have intensified efforts to ensure public safety and uphold law and order across the City.

Police Commissioner B Dayananda detailed the extensive searches and inspections conducted on 29 and 30 November, targeting narcotics, safety violations, and community engagement.



During this operation, the anti-narcotics wing of the Central Crime Branch (CCB) registered 380 cases under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, seizing 1.1kg of marijuana valued at Rs 4,000 and arresting three individuals linked to drug peddling.

Additionally, the police inspected over 1,633 bars, restaurants, and 1,020 lodgings, including service apartments, leading to significant interventions, including the rescue of six foreign women from forced prostitution.

In their crackdown on illegal residency, officers examined the documents of 411 foreign nationals, forwarding cases to the Foreigners Regional Registration Office for deportation. To further bolster safety, special checkposts have been established to deter drunk driving. *—Salar News*

Case against KCR's nephew in phone tapping plaint

HYDERABAD, 3 DEC

A case has been registered against senior BRS leader and Siddipet MLA T Harish Rao and others after a real estate businessman alleged that his phone was tapped by them, police said on Tuesday. The complainant, G Chakradhar Goud, who contested the 2023 assembly elections on a BSP ticket from Siddipet and lost, accused Harish Rao, the nephew of former Telangana Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao, of using state intelligence to monitor his movements and those of his associates and family members. Reacting to the registration of the case against him, Rao hit out at Telangana Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy, accusing him of foisting many false cases against him as he is "exposing" him (Revanth Reddy). The complainant further suspected that the former minister influenced police officials to monitor his activities —*PTI*

Andhra cabinet okays IT, Textile, Maritime policies

AMARAVATI, 3 DEC

Andhra Pradesh cabinet on Tuesday approved policies of Information Technology and Global Competitive Centres, Apparel and Textile and Maritime, among others, the state government said. AP Minister for Municipal Administration and Urban Development P Narayana said the cabinet approved to call tenders for stalled infrastructure works estimated to be over Rs 11000 crore at the capital Amaravati. Information and Public Relations Minister K Parthasarathy, giving details of the cabinet decisions, said it has approved Information Technology and Global competitive Centres policy 4.0 2024-29 under which Remote, Hybrid and coworking spaces will be developed. The Andhra Pradesh Apparel and Textile policy 4.0 2024-29, which was approved by the Cabinet is aimed at attracting Rs 10,000 crore investments and creating two lakh jobs in the next five years —*PTI*

Another Kerala CPI(M) leader joins BJP

T'PURAM, 3 DEC

Days after a CPI(M) leader from Alappuzha quit the party and joined the BJP amidst reports of factional feud in its conferences, another party leader on Tuesday appears to have taken the same path. As Madhu Mullassery announced his exit from the party in the morning, the CPI(M) expelled him from its primary membership, saying he acted in contravention of party principles and defamed it in the public sphere. Mullassery, a former area secretary of the CPI(M) in Mangalapuram and a party member for 42 years, blamed mistreatment by Left MLA and district committee secretary V Joy for his exit. "I have decided to leave a party for which I have worked for 42 years as it is difficult to work alongside the district secretary V Joy," he said —*PTI*

Don't want to visit Delhi because of pollution: Gadkari

NEW DELHI, 3 DEC

Irked by increased pollution levels in Delhi, Union minister Nitin Gadkari, who is an MP from Nagpur, on Tuesday confessed that he does not feel like visiting the national capital as he often catches infection here. Addressing an event here, Gadkari said the city of Delhi is such that "I do not like to live here. I get infection due to pollution here". "Har baar Delhi me aata hua, aisa lagta hain ki (Delhi) jaana chahiye ki nahi. Itna bhayankar pollution hai (Every time, while coming to Delhi, I think whether I should go or not because pollution levels are so high," he said. Gadkari suggested that the best way to reduce pollution is to bring down the consumption of fossil fuels. —*PTI*

INDIA MPs hold protest over Adani issue

TMC, SP skip meeting on formulating INDIA block's joint strategy during the session

NEW DELHI, 3 DEC

MPs of several INDIA bloc parties protested on the Parliament premises on Tuesday over the Adani issue and reiterated their demand for a probe by a joint parliamentary committee into the matter.

MPs of the Congress, AAP, RJD, Shiv Sena (UBT), DMK and the Left parties, among others, raised slogans against Prime Minister Narendra Modi and demanded accountability.

Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi, AAP's Sanjay Singh, RJD's Misa Bharti and Shiv Sena (UBT)'s Arvind Sawant also participated in the protest on the steps leading to the Parliament's Makar Dwar.

In a post on Facebook, Gandhi said, "Protesting at Makar Dwar, Parliament complex, today, asking the real question: Who benefits from Adani's billions, Modi ji? The Prime Minister's silence speaks volumes."

The Congress and some other opposition parties have been demanding a joint parliamentary committee (JPC) probe following the indictment of Adani Group chairperson Gautam Adani and other company officials by US prosecutors on bribery and fraud charges.

However, some other opposition parties, especially the TMC, have not attached the same priority to the Adani row and from the start wanted Parliament to discuss a host of different issues, including unemployment, price rise and the Centre's alleged discrimination against opposition-ruled states in fund allocation.

The TMC has skipped opposition meetings on formulating INDIA bloc's joint strategy during the session. —*PTI*

INDIA Bloc MPs protest in Parl premises, on Tuesday **PHOTO: PTI**

PARL PASSES OILFIELDS BILL

Rajya Sabha passed a bill that seeks to amend existing law governing exploration and production of oil and gas, and delink petroleum operations from mining operations to boost investment in the sector.

- 1. Separation of petroleum operations from mining to attract investments
- 2. Introduction of policy stability, dispute resolution, and infrastructure sharing.
- 3.Decriminalisation of certain provisions, replacing penalties with adjudication.
- 4.Extension of lease periods for fossil fuel production.
- 5.Focus on reducing reliance on oil imports by boosting domestic production.

> **If you continue with adjournments, then for the number of days it has been adjourned, you will have to attend the proceedings on Saturday and Sunday as well**
>
> -Om Birla, Lok Sabha Speaker

Rahul, other Cong MPs to visit Sambhal today

LUCKNOW/ SAMBHAL, 3 DEC

Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi along with the five other Congress MPs from Uttar Pradesh will visit violence-hit Sambhal on Wednesday, Uttar Pradesh Congress chief Ajay Rai said.

Newly-elected Wayanad MP Priyanka Gandhi Vadra is also likely to accompany the delegation, he said. The party's general secretary and UP in-charge Avinash Pande will be there too, Rai told PTI.

When asked about the Rahul Gandhi's visit to Sambhal, Superintendent of Police of Sambhal Krishan Kumar told PTI, "Section 163 of the BNSS is already imposed in Sambhal. No outsider is allowed (to enter Sambhal). If they come, then they will be served a notice."

Meanwhile, Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav on Tuesday said the violence in Uttar Pradesh's Sambhal was part of a "well-planned" conspiracy and that the talk of "khudai" (digging) across the country by the BJP and its associates will end up hurting communal amity.

Raising the issue in the Lok Sabha, the former Uttar Pradesh chief minister squarely blamed the local police and administration for the recent violence in Sambhal.

BJP should look at Kailash Mansarovar, a Hindu pilgrimage site located in China, instead of "digging" everywhere. A day might come when China might not allow Indians to go for darshan, he said. —*PTI*

Urge UN to dispatch peacekeeping forces to Bangladesh: TMC

NEW DELHI, 3 DEC

Expressing concern over targeting of religious minorities in Bangladesh, the Trinamool Congress on Tuesday urged the central government to ask the United Nations to immediately dispatch peacekeeping forces to the neighbouring country.

TMC's Sudip Bandyopadhyay raised the issue during the Zero Hour in the Lok Sabha.

He said minorities, including Hindus, are being tortured and killed in Bangladesh and urged the Centre to appeal to the UN to immediately send peacekeeping forces to the country.

Being an immediate neighbour of Bangladesh, West Bengal is directly affected by the happenings there. In the past too, there had been an influx of refugees, he said.

Bandyopadhyay said the government has so far maintained silence on the issue and asked External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar to apprise the House of the latest developments in the matter.

On Monday, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee urged the Centre to move the UN seeking deployment of a peacekeeping mission in Bangladesh.

> **This is a complete violation of human rights and I believe that international human rights organisations must intervene immediately**
>
> -Suvendu Adhikari, West Bengal leader of Oppn

Congress MP Shashi Tharoor took a dig at Mamata over her request for deploying United Nations (UN). Reacting to Banerjee's request, Tharoor said the West Bengal CM has not fully understood the role of peacekeepers. —*PTI*

Chandigarh 1st to implement 3 new criminal laws: PM

CHANDIGARH, 3 DEC

Chandigarh has become the country's first administrative unit where 100 per cent implementation of the three criminal laws has been done with Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday saying these new legislations are becoming protector of citizen's rights and the basis of ease of justice.

The laws -- Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita and Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam -- came into effect on July 1, replacing the British-era Indian Penal Code, Code of Criminal Procedure and the Indian Evidence Act, respectively.

Chandigarh has become the country's first administrative unit where 100 per cent implementation of the three laws has been done.

Speaking on the occasion, the prime minister said the new criminal laws represent a concrete step towards realising the ideals enshrined in the Constitution for the benefit of all citizens.

He said these laws signify the end of colonial-era laws.

The colonial-era laws were the medium of atrocities and exploitation committed by the British when they ruled over India, Modi added.

Today, with the introduction of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita and Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, India has taken a significant move forward in that direction, he said.

Our steps are in line with the democratic spirit of "of the people, by the people, for the people," a fundamental principle of our democracy, he said.

Nyaya Sanhita is woven with the ideals of equality, harmony and social justice, Modi further said.

The mantra of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita is - citizen first, he said —*PTI*

Narendra Modi **PHOTO: PTI**

PENANCE FOR SINS

A day after the Sikh clergy pronounced the 'tankhah' (religious punishment) for Sukhbir Singh Badal, the Shiromani Akali Dal leader on Tuesday performed the duty of a 'sewadar' outside the Golden Temple here. Holding a spear in one hand, Badal, in blue 'sewadar' clothes, was at the entrance of Golden Temple in his wheelchair, serving his punishment **PHOTO: PTI**

PROTESTS ERUPT IN MANIPUR AGAINST FMR SCRAPPING

CHURACHANDPUR, 3 DEC

A demonstration was held in Manipur's Churachandpur district on Tuesday to protest the government's decision to scrap the India-Myanmar Free Movement Regime (FMR).

The demonstration, led by the United Zou Organisation (UZO), started at the 'Wall of Remembrance' around 11.30 am.

Carrying posters and placards, the demonstrators raised slogans against the government's decision to scrap FMR and fence the international border.

The demonstration was attended by Saikot MLA Paolienlal Haokip, Henglep MLA Letzamang Haokip and Singngat MLA Chinlunthang, besides leaders of various Kuki-Zo tribes.

A one-minute silence was also observed in remembrance of those killed in the ongoing ethnic violence in the state that has claimed over 250 lives since May last year.

The announcement to scrap it was made in February after Shah said India decided to fence the entire 1,643-km-long India-Myanmar border. —*PTI*

ISKCON urges B'desh to protect lawyers for Das

KOLKATA, 3 DEC

PHOTO: PTI

International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) Kolkata on Tuesday appealed to the Bangladesh government to ensure the safety of lawyers willing to represent Hindu monk Chinmoy Krishna Das in an ongoing case, following a brutal attack on his advocate.

ISKCON Kolkata spokesperson Radharamn Das on Monday claimed that Ramen Roy, who was defending Chinmoy Krishna Das, was attacked by a group of Islamists at his home.

Das criticised the Bangladesh government over "no lawyer appearing as defence counsel" for the Hindu monk and said it is against the premise of basic human rights.

"It is really frustrating to see that there was no defence lawyer. Is this justice? Is this how you provide free and fair justice? We would urge the Bangladesh government to look into the matter," Das said.

Meanwhile, a day after protesters stormed the Bangladesh consulate in Agartala, Delhi Police on Tuesday stepped up security around the Bangladesh High Commission in Chanakyapuri here, according to officials. —*PTI*

SWEARING-IN TODAY

Azad Maidan decks up for Mahayuti's big show

MUMBAI, 3 DEC

Preparations are in full swing at Mumbai's Azad Maidan for the swearing-in ceremony of the new Mahayuti government in Maharashtra on 5 December, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi expected to attend the event.

BJP leader Devendra Fadnavis is being considered the frontrunner for the chief minister's post, but the Mahayuti alliance has not announced any name yet with the state BJP legislature party's meeting scheduled to take place on 4 December.

Maharashtra BJP president Chandrashekhar Bawankule has been overseeing preparations for the ceremony and visited the venue in south Mumbai on Monday.

Mahayuti leaders take stock of the preparations at Azad maidan **PHOTO: PTI**

Invitations have also been extended to chief ministers and deputy chief ministers of the states ruled by the National Democratic Alliance (NDA). Central ministers, governors and key central BJP office-bearers are also expected to be present, BJP sources said.

Meanwhile, state NCP chief Sunil Tatkare said deputy chief minister and NCP chief Ajit Pawar was scheduled to meet Union minister Amit Shah in Delhi on Tuesday evening. No appointment had been sought, he said in response to reports that Pawar had sought a meeting with Shah but was put on "waiting list". —*PTI*

AFTER POLICE INTERVENTION

M'rashtra village cancels ballot paper repoll

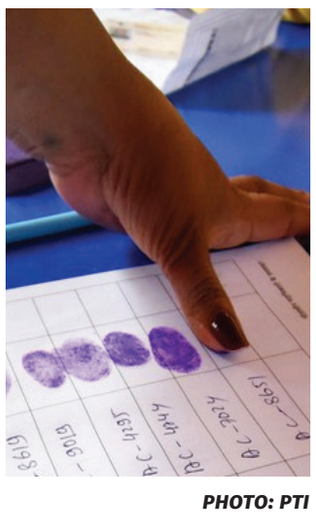


PHOTO: PTI

SOLAPUR/MUMBAI, 3 DEC

A section of villagers from Maharashtra's Malshrias assembly segment seeking "re-election using ballot papers" gave up their plan on Tuesday after intervention by police and administration, NCP (SP) leader Uttam Jankar who won the seat said.

State Congress president Nana Patole alleged that officials used police to block villagers under BJP's pressure, raising serious concerns about the credibility of EVMs.

Earlier, residents of Markadwadi village under the Malshiras segment in Solapur district had put up banners claiming a "repoll" will be held on "ballot papers" on December 3.

- State Congress president Nana Patole alleged that officials used police to block villagers under BJP's pressure, raising serious concerns about the credibility of EVMs

The village is part of the Malshiras assembly constituency, where Jankar defeated BJP's Ram Satpute by 13,147 votes in the November 20 polls.

Though Jankar won the seat, Markadwadi residents claimed the quantum of votes polled by the NCP (SP) leader was less compared with Satpute, expressing doubt about Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs).

The Malshiras sub-divisional magistrate on Monday imposed prohibitory orders, under section 163 of the Bharatiya Nagrik Suraksha Sanhita, from December 2 to 5.

Jankar said after discussions with police officials and villagers, the "repoll" plan was cancelled.

The Congress, which won only 16 seats in the Maharashtra assembly polls, has questioned the election process and EVM credibility.

On Tuesday, Patole claimed that the people of Maharashtra suspect that elections not conducted transparently. —*PTI*

Bengal diverted welfare funds, says Chouhan

NEW DELHI, 3 DEC

Declaring that the government would not allow the misuse of resources, Union Rural Development Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Tuesday alleged that the West Bengal government was diverting central funds and making "undeserving" people beneficiaries of welfare schemes.

As Lok Sabha proceedings began in the morning after six days of disruption, Chouhan's junior Chandra Sekhar Pemmasani dismissed the suggestion that the Centre has reduced funds for the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS).

Pemmasani said the budget allocation for MGNREGS has been increased by Rs 10,000 crore to Rs 20,000 crore every year – in comparison to the previous year – and was never reduced.

Chouhan strongly refuted Trinamool Congress member Kalyan Banerjee's allegation that Central funds of various welfare schemes had not been released to West Bengal.

If a Central scheme is not implemented properly or its funds misused, the Central government can stop the funding to the states, Chouhan said citing the law. —*PTI*

Gujarat: 4 killed in tank explosion at industrial unit

BHARUCH, 3 DEC

Four workers were killed after a storage tank exploded at an industrial unit in Ankleshwar GIDC area of Bharuch district in Gujarat on Tuesday afternoon, police said. The blast occurred when labourers were working atop a storage tank inside the premises of Detox India Pvt Ltd, which is into industrial waste treatment, said Bharuch Superintendent of Police, Mayur Chavda. Police personnel rushed to the spot for further investigation, said Chavda *—PTI*

Bomb scare at Taj Mahal, turns out to be a hoax

AGRA, 3 DEC

An email threatening to blow up the Taj Mahal was received by the regional office of Uttar Pradesh Tourism here Tuesday which later turned out to be hoax, a police official said. Bomb disposal squad, dog squad and other teams were pressed into service but nothing suspicious was found, ACP Sayed Areeb Ahmad, entrusted with the security of the Taj, told PTI. "An email was received by Uttar Pradesh Tourism office threatening to blow up the Taj Mahal. We have found nothing as per the email. Bomb disposal squad, dog squad and other teams reached the Taj Mahal for the safety check," he said. *—PTI*

HC reinstates arms licence for Puja Khedkar's mother

MUMBAI, 3 DEC

The Bombay High Court has quashed an order passed by the Pune police commissioner cancelling the arms licence of former IAS officer Puja Khedkar's mother Manorama Khedkar. A division bench of Justices Revati Mohite Dere and Prithviraj Chavan on 27 November remitted the matter for fresh consideration to the Pune commissioner noting that the earlier notice was not duly served on Manorama Khedkar. The case arose after a viral video showed Manorama Khedkar brandishing a gun during an argument over a land dispute in Dhadwali village leading to her arrest on 18 July from Hirkaniwadi village in Raigad. Manorama Khedkar, her husband and five others were charged under Indian Penal Code sections 307 (attempt to murder), 144 (unlawful assembly armed with a deadly weapon), 147 (rioting), and 506 (criminal intimidation), as well as provisions of the Arms Act. *—PTI*

Several districts have battered by torrential rain, badly damaged roads and lack of access to essentials amid cyclone Fengal *PHOTO: PTI*

Inundation woes persist as rains batter TN districts

PM assures support from Centre; CM announces flood relief

CHENNAI, 3 DEC

Several districts in Tamil Nadu adversely battered by torrential rain are battling with inundation woes, badly damaged roads and lack of access to essential commodities.

In certain areas like Arasur in Villupuram district, people confronted with depleted essential commodities, resorted to a sudden agitation demanding the essentials.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi spoke to Chief Minister MK Stalin on Tuesday to enquire about the flood situation in parts of the state and assured him of all possible support from the Centre.

The "catastrophic event" resulted in the loss of 12 human lives, 2,416 huts, 721 houses and 963 cattle. Widespread damage was also caused to agriculture and horticulture crop and irrigation systems, the state government said.

At Arasur, 18 people who took shelter in a temple that was damaged due to rain were rescued. The NDRF personnel successfully evacuated people and livestock marooned in a village in Cuddalore district.

Meanwhile, the families in Villupuram, Cuddalore and Kallakurichi districts which bore the brunt of damage caused by Cyclone Fengal would be provided a relief of Rs 2,000 each, Tamil Nadu Chief M K Stalin announced on Tuesday.

The meeting decided to extend relief assistance to the rain-hit people in Villupuram, Kallakurichi, Thiruvannamalai, Cuddalore, Dharmapuri and Krishnagiri districts, and extend Rs 5 lakh as compensation each to the families who lost their kin due to cyclone or floods.

The government has decided to provide Rs 10,000 as compensation for damaged huts, give priority to construct houses under the Kalaignar Kanavu Illam (housing scheme) for completely damaged huts, provide Rs 17,000 per hectare relief for rain-damaged paddy crops, including irrigated crops to farmers, and Rs 22,500 per hectare for perennial crops and trees damaged.

Rahul asks Cong workers to help administration in relief work

Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi on Tuesday termed "devastating" the damage caused by Cyclone Fengal in Tamil Nadu and urged Congress workers in the state to help the administration in relief efforts wherever possible.

"I urge all Congress workers in the state to step forward and help the administration in relief efforts wherever possible," the former Congress chief said *—PTI*

TRACKER DOGS, DRONES DEPLOYED

Manipur: 2,000 Army troops search for missing man

Manipur Police announced on social media that "massive joint search operations" have been underway since 25 November *PHOTO: PTI*

IMPHAL, 3 DEC

The Indian Army has mobilised over 2,000 personnel in a search operation for Laishram Kamalbabu Singh, a Meitei man missing for over a week. Singh, aged 56 and a works supervisor for a contractor with the Military Engineering Services (MES) at Leimakhong Military Station in the 57th Mountain Division, disappeared on 25 November.

Manipur Chief Minister N Biren Singh has urged military authorities to take responsibility for locating Singh. The Manipur Police announced on social media that "massive joint search operations" have been underway since 25 November, aided by the Indian Army.

The Army's search efforts encompass more than 2,000 troops, along with helicopters, drones, and military tracking dogs. Authorities are also employing technical intelligence to further their investigation.

In response to Singh's disappearance, a Joint Action Committee (JAC) has organised a sit-in protest at Kanto Sabal, approximately 2.5 km from the military station, with Singh's wife, Akoijam Belarani, participating in the demonstrations. Protesters have expressed concerns that Singh may have been abducted by militants.

The military camp is located in Kangpokpi district, 16 km from Imphal, in an area steeped in ethnic tensions, which have claimed over 250 lives since last year. *—PTI*

CJI recuses from hearing CEC, EC selection pleas

NEW DELHI, 3 DEC

Chief Justice of India Sanjiv Khanna on Tuesday recused himself from hearing a batch of pleas challenging exclusion of the CJI from panel meant for selecting chief election commissioner and commissioners.

At the outset, the CJI, who was sitting on the bench with Justice Sanjay Kumar, told the advocates appearing for six separate petitioners that he couldn't hear pleas now.

"List the matter before a bench of which I am not a part of," the CJI said.

Senior advocate Gopal Sankaranarayanan and lawyer Prashant Bhushan said the previous bench headed by Justice Khanna had issued the notice and passed interim orders in the matter and they had no objection if he continued hearing the matter.

Additionally, the bench instructed the union government and Commission to file their responses to raised challenges. *—PTI*

ED raids in WB over admissions scam

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Tuesday held simultaneous raids and search operations at different locations in West Bengal in connection with alleged irregularities in NRI quota admissions in several medical colleges and hospitals, an officer said. The raids were conducted at the residences of officials of those institutions in Kolkata's Salt Lake as well as in the districts of Birbhum, Durgapur, Jhargram and Burdwan. The ED officers also raided the residence of former CPI(M) leader Lakshman Seth in Haldia.

SC to hear plea against FIR under Gangsters Act

The Supreme Court has agreed to hear a plea challenging an Allahabad High Court order that dismissed an application seeking the quashing of a chargesheet and proceedings under the Uttar Pradesh Gangsters and Anti-Social Activities (Prevention) Act. The bench on 2 December agreed to hear the petition by Raj Khan and posted the matter for final arguments after hearing both sides.

ALAPPUZHA CAR CRASH

Kerala mourns death of 5 medicos killed in accident

ALAPPUZHA, 3 DEC

A night out turned into tragedy for five medical students of this coastal district in Kerala, who were killed in an accident, leaving their families and friends grief-stricken.

Parents who had spoken to their children hours before the mishap, and hostel roommates who shared moments of laughter with them minutes before the tragedy, are now struggling to come to terms with the devastating loss.

The five first-year MBBS students of the Vandanam Government Medical College in Alappuzha – Mohammed Abdul Jabbar from Kannur, Mohammed Ibrahim from Lakshadweep, Devanandan from Malappuram, Ayush Shaji from Alappuzha, and Srideep from Palakkad – were killed after the rented car they were travelling in collided with a KSRTC bus on Monday night, leaving six seriously injured.

An eyewitness said the screams of the victims were still haunting him. "It is still unclear what actually happened. Maybe the incessant rains caused some difficulties for the person driving the car," he said, adding that when he reached the car, one of the students caught hold of his hand, pleaded for help, and soon became unconscious.

Later in the day, hundreds of people thronged at the medical college campus when the students' bodies were brought there for public homage after post-mortem procedures. Police and security personnel had a tough time controlling the crowd of students, teachers, and local people.

Governor Arif Mohammed Khan, state Ministers Veena George, P Prasad and Saji Cheriyan and several other people's representatives were among those who paid last respects to the medical students *—PTI*

Palakkad native Sreedeep Valsan, a promising MBBS student, was among the five lives tragically lost in a car crash in Alappuzha *PHOTO: PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Former CBI director Vijay Shankar passes away at 76

NEW DELHI, 3 DEC

Former CBI director Vijay Shankar passed away on Tuesday after prolonged illness, his family said. He was 76 years old. Shankar was admitted to a private hospital in Noida for some time. His mortal remains will be donated to AIIMS as per his last wish, they said. A 1969-batch IPS officer of the Uttar Pradesh cadre, Shankar headed the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) from 12, December 2005 to 31, July 2008. During his tenure as CBI director, the agency took over the infamous Aarushi-Hemraj double murder case. As additional director of CBI, he supervised the extradition of gangster Abu Salem and actor Monika Bedi from Portugal. Before being appointed CBI director, Shankar headed the National Disaster Response Force, and Civil Defence and Home Guards. *—PTI*

PURI TEMPLE DIRECTS ISKCON ON RITUALS

BHUBANESWAR, 3 DEC

Shree Jagannath Temple Managing Committee (SJTM) has told the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) that Rath Yatra should be held between the second and tenth day of Shukla Paksha in Ashadha month in accordance with scriptural guidelines.

The SJTM, the highest decision-making body of the 12th-century Shree Jagannath Temple in Puri, emphasised that there should be no deviation from the prescribed 'Tithi' (dates) for the annual Rath Yatra, which is usually held in June-end or July.

This was communicated to ISKCON by Gajapati Maharaja of Puri, Divya Singha Deb, who is also the chairman of the SJTM, during a meeting at the Royal Palace in Puri on Monday.

Following the meeting, Padhee told reporters, "ISKCON was advised against conducting an untimely Rath Yatra as it goes against tradition. *—PTI*

Theatre actor kills pig on stage, eats meat; held

BHUBANESWAR, 3 DEC

A 45-year-old theatre actor portraying a demon in a Ramayana play was arrested for brutally killing a live pig on stage in Odisha's Ganjam district. The incident, which occurred on 24 November during the Kanjianal Yatra festival in Ralab village under Hinjili police station limits, triggered statewide outrage and condemnation in the Odisha Assembly on 2 December, Monday.

In an attempt to attract audiences, the theatre group displayed snakes, while the actor used a sharp knife to rip open the stomach of a pig tied to the stage ceiling, eating some of its organs in full public view. Videos of the gruesome act went viral on social media, drawing widespread criticism from animal rights activists and political leaders.

The Berhampur Divisional Forest Officer, Sunny Khokar, stated that the organisers violated the Wildlife Protection Act and animal cruelty laws. Alongside the actor, Bimbadhar Gouda, one of the organisers, was also arrested. Authorities are searching for others involved, including those who displayed snakes during the performance.

The state government's 2022 guidelines prohibit public display of snakes, even by certified handlers. Ruling BJP lawmakers Babu Singh and Sanatan Bijuli condemned the incident in the Assembly, calling for strict action. Animal rights advocates have demanded stringent measures against the accused. *—Agencies*

PHOTO: REPRESENTATIVE IMAGE

EMPOWERED VISION

UP-youth creates AI-goggles for blind

LAKHIMPUR KHERI, 3 DEC

Talent knows no boundaries. A testament to this is 28-year-old Muneer Khan from Lakhimpur Kheri in Uttar Pradesh, whose innovations and technical skills have gained him global recognition.

Born in humble surroundings in Kheri's Gauriya village, Muneer lost his father when he was one year old. After completing his primary education at the government-run school in his village, Muneer went on to study at a private inter-college and thereafter got admission in the Birla Institute of Applied Sciences in Bhimtal, Uttarakhand.

During his second year, Khan completed multiple research internships in France and Russia, which sparked his interest in Artificial Intelligence (AI) and sensor technology. After completing his master's from Columbia University, he founded Cadre Technologies (USA & India).

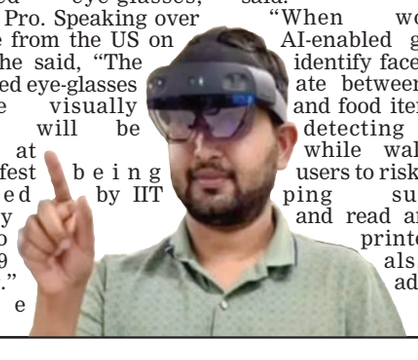
While at Columbia, Khan developed a "smart water bottle". Named Hydrohomie, it helped detect dehydration levels and suggested immediate water intake. It earned him the Best Project Award from the university.

He also designed a "smart soil testing device", which helps identify micro-nutrients in soil within minutes. It won him the Young Scientist Award 2024, which was presented to him by Union Minister Nitin Gadkari in July.

Now, Khan has named his latest invention, the AI-enabled eye-glasses, AI-Vision Pro. Speaking over the phone from the US on Monday, he said, "The AI-equipped eye-glasses for the visually impaired will be unveiled at the Techfest being organised by IIT Bombay from 17 to 19 December."

"The VisionPro eye-glasses are integrated with sensors, cameras, Nvidia Jetson processors, LiDAR technology and AI model computation, the glasses provide real-time interpretation of the environment and surroundings," he said. *—PTI*

"When worn, the AI-enabled glasses help identify faces, differentiate between medicines and food items, assist in detecting obstacles while walking, alert users to risks while mapping surroundings and read and interpret printed materials," Khan added. *—PTI*



Ratapani forest declared eighth tiger reserve in MP

BHOPAL, 3 DEC

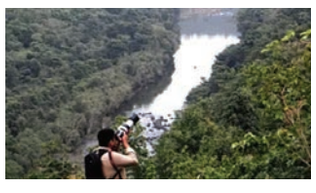
The Madhya Pradesh government has officially declared the Ratapani forest in Raisen district as the state's eighth tiger reserve, officials confirmed on Tuesday. This announcement follows a notification issued by the state government on Monday.

The newly designated Ratapani Tiger Reserve spans an area of 1,271.465 square kilometres, comprising a core area of 763.812 square kilometres and a buffer zone of 507.653 square kilometres.

Notably, nine villages situated within the reserve will not be included in the core area, ensuring that the current rights of the local villagers remain unchanged.

The establishment of this reserve is seen as a significant move towards enhanced wildlife management, as it will enable the allocation of funds from the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA), according to a government release.

Chief Minister Mohan Yadav played a pivotal role in the declaration, furthering the state's commitment to tiger conservation. *—PTI*



Survivors of the 1984 Bhopal gas tragedy take out a torch rally to mark the 40th anniversary of the disaster, in Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh **PHOTOS: PTI**

BHOPAL GAS TRAGEDY

THE NIGHT OF TERROR, A SCIENTIST RECALLS

Haunting memories of the Bhopal gas tragedy are still afresh for an ex-scientist at Union Carbide's Research Centre even after 40 years as he vividly remembers waiting for a bus ride on 3 December, 1984, unaware of the worst industrial disaster in the days of limited sources of information.

The scientist, who requested anonymity, left his home in Arera Colony around 8am and expected his usual bus ride to reach the Union Carbide research centre. However, as minutes ticked by and the bus didn't arrive by 8.30 am, a sense of unease grew.

In the absence of the Internet, mobile phones or social media, people used to rely on landline phones, telegrams, radio bulletins, newspapers, paan and tea shops to keep them updated about happenings in their city and the country, he said.

"As we waited for the bus, a passerby hurriedly told us that gas had leaked resulting in many deaths. I heard about the gas tragedy at a paan shop. Rumours were spreading like wildfire which left us confused," the scientist told PTI on Monday.

The scientist said he and others decided to go to the factory in an autorickshaw.

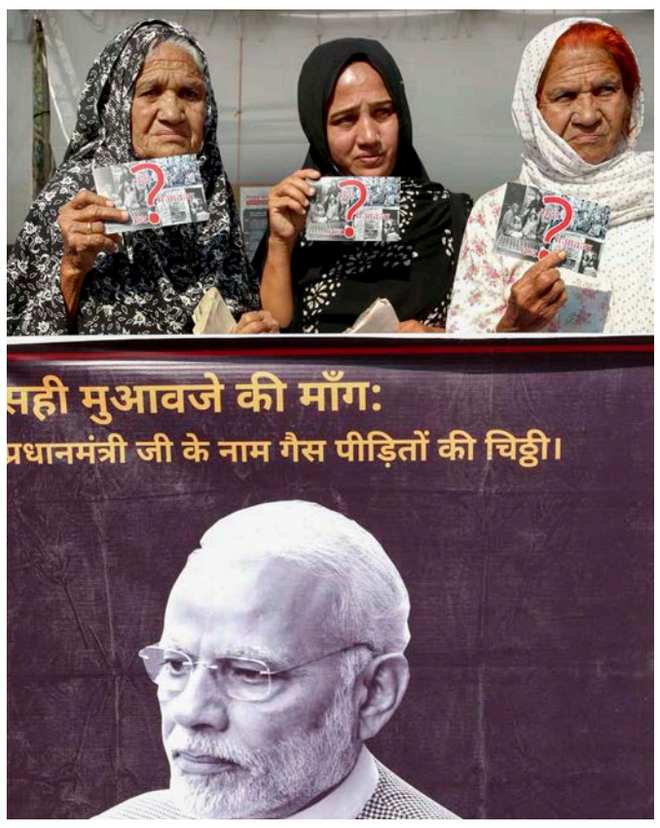
We saw people running helter-skelter en route to the office located atop Shyamala Hills overlooking the picturesque Upper Lake, he recalled.

"At the Union Carbide research centre, we saw the deployment of police at the gate who didn't allow us to go inside," he said.

The scientist further said he heard that gas had leaked from the plant and bodies piled up in the Government Hamidia Hospital.

"Finally, the company management informed us through a message that the research centre will remain closed for the day and asked us to go home," he said, adding that they returned home around 9.30-9.45 am.

He learned about the magnitude of the tragedy, which turned out to be the world's worst industrial disaster, from a colleague told about it by the company management.



Victims of the gas tragedy write to PM Narendra Modi demanding adequate compensation proper rehabilitation and medical treatment

After a week, the research centre staff was asked not to leave their houses.

"We were also told to remove our nameplates mentioning that we were working in Carbide for our safety considering the anger among people," he said.

Senior press photographer Gopal Jain said nobody knew what happened exactly and rumours flew thick and fast.

"Around 2.30am, a woman relative came to my house in the Teen Shade area with her eyes red. She told us dacoits had attacked the old Bhopal area by burning red chillies in large numbers. She said the entire area is engulfed in smoke," he told PTI.

Jain immediately rushed out of his house to find several people running in the opposite direction of the Old Bhopal area towards the new Bhopal locality. "Things became clear on 3 December morning when I went to Hamidia Hospital, which was a scene of chaos. Several bodies were lying at the hospital," Jain reminisced.

The photographer said he learnt about the gas leak tragedy at the hospital.

"I immediately informed BBC veteran Mark Tully over the phone from the city exchange (Department of Telecommunication).

Tully flew to Bhopal the same day in a special plane," he said.

Senior journalist Virendra Sinha, who was working for Samachar Bharti news agency and residing in Old Bhopal, reminisced that he left the city on December 2 for Delhi via Uttar Pradesh to attend a marriage reception.

"I was getting ready in the Delhi office before leaving for Banda in UP when my brother sent a message on the office telex. 'We all are fine and don't worry about anything. Go ahead with your programme'," Sinha said, adding that he was confused as everything was fine when he boarded the train.

He said the nature and scale of the gas tragedy was initially unclear as the incident occurred in the night.

"Initial news reports suggested that 8 to 10 people died and 30 to 40 fell unconscious after gas leaked in Bhopal," he said.

Sinha said when he reached Banda the next day, he sent someone to fetch the newspaper "Aaj". "The newspaper edition had a banner headline about the Bhopal Gas Tragedy stating that nearly 10,000 people died and over 2 lakh injured," he recalled. Sinha decided to rush back to Bhopal without attending the marriage reception.

"The magnitude of the tragedy became clear later," said Sinha, who retired from Bhasha news agency, the Hindi service of PTI. On the intervening nights of 2-3 December, 1984, the highly toxic methyl isocyanate gas leaked from the Union Carbide plant, killing 5,474 people and maiming more than 5 lakh others.

However, even after 40 years, a sense of closure eludes some survivors who are afflicted by congenital disorders. Bhopal resident Sharda Yadav's two sons, in their 20s, are congenitally disabled, a disorder linked to the exposure of their father to the gas that leaked from Union Carbide's plant. Social activists claim that 337 tonnes of hazardous waste remains in a shed of the now-defunct Union Carbide despite Rs 126 crore being given to the Madhya Pradesh government by the Centre for disposal. *—PTI*

LETTERS write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

SALAR سالار

Death in the air: Life in world's most polluted city

As the toxic smog enshrouds New Delhi, Gola Noor pushes the wooden cart loaded with waste with her bare hands to help her coughing husband, Shahbaz, who struggles to peddle the cycle.

Under hazy skies, the couple, barely 40 years old, leave at 6am daily to pick waste in Delhi. Shahbaz stops peddling to take long, gasping breaths. "Death is in the air," he says, spitting on the road. "The air tastes bitter and the coughing is constant now."

His wife, Noor, spent the last night in a nearby hospital due to "excessive itching" in her watery eyes. But she returned to work the next morning with Shahbaz. "Dying of hunger sounds more horrific than dying slowly of suffocation," she tells Shahbaz, signalling to him to continue peddling. "You are stopping like we have an option [to not get out of the home]."

For nearly three weeks, the capital has been swamped by deadly smog — one evening, the Air Quality Index (AQI) hovered over 1,700, more than 17 times higher than the acceptable limit. The smog contains "hazardous" levels of PM2.5, a particulate matter measuring 2.5 microns or less in diameter, that can be carried into the lungs causing deadly diseases and cardiac issues.

Chief Minister Atishi called it a "medical emergency", the schools have been shut, and the visibility on the streets has dropped to as low as 50m. Yet the nightmarish story of New Delhi's winters is by now a familiar tale, a deja vu for the city's residents.

Having worsened during the last decade, the months-long spell of intense smog during winter in a city of more than 30 million people translates into severe neurological, cardiovascular, and respiratory diseases, lung capacity loss, or even cancer. It is also changing how people live in the world's most polluted city, amplifying the social divides in an already deeply unequal society.

'Vastly inequitable' impact

Noor insists that no one outside New Delhi would understand what it means "to inhale death, with every single breath". Sitting amid a pile of rubbish and flies, Noor segregates different grades of plastic from other waste. She does not smell the stench of rotten food but is irked by the smog around her.

Two winters back, her then-15-year-old daughter, Rukhsana, was struck with a "mysterious illness" that cut her weight drastically and kept the family awake the whole night with her coughs. Noor went into a debt of Rs 70,000 before Rukhsana was diagnosed with tuberculosis at a private hospital.

"She has recovered now, thanks to God, but every winter, the disease surfaces again," Noor tells Al Jazeera as she continues segregating waste. Returning to their makeshift shanty after dark does not help either.

"This city is dying because of rich people's vehicles. But they will be saved because they have money; like they survived the Covid-19 lockdown," says Shahbaz, looking at his wife. "Where should a poor person like me go?" When the pandemic hit, the government imposed a lockdown abruptly, shutting down businesses that led to more than 120 million job losses.

There are multiple reasons why New Delhi almost never has blue skies — ranging from emissions from cars, fumes from industries, and crop burning by farmers in nearby states, to burning of coal for energy generation at large.

Air pollution accounts for nearly 2.18 million deaths per year in India, second only to China, according to research published by the British Medical Journal, while the University of Chicago's Air Quality Life Index notes that more than 510 million people who live in northern India – nearly 40 percent of India's population – are "on track" to lose 7.6 years of their lives on average.

But among Indians, poorer households bear a disproportional impact from pollution caused by others, a study in 2021 co-authored by Narasimha Rao, an associate professor at the Yale School of the Environment, found.

"It's not so much about their public health impact but about the equity issue," Rao tells Al Jazeera in an interview. "An analysis of how much people are contributing to the pollution, compared to how much they are bearing of the exposure, shows a vastly inequitable situation."

"There's a socialising of rich people's pollution that's happening in Delhi," adds Rao. "The ability of the richer people to cope with the pollution they cause is much better; they can always roll up the windows [of their cars]. But a poor person's vulnerability to the same exposure is different."

Every winter, the local and national governments roll out measures — like sprinkling water, capping vehicle entry into cities — that are "bandaging the situation" rather than addressing the root causes behind the worsening pollution, said Rao.

—Courtesy, Al Jazeera

Air pollution accounts for nearly 2.18 million deaths per year in India **PHOTO: PTI**

Tension escalates as India sees a rise in mosque-temple spats

At least five people were killed, and many more injured, last week during street clashes sparked by a survey investigating if the centuries-old Shahi Jama Masjid mosque was built on the former site of a Hindu temple in Uttar Pradesh.

The hilltop mosque in Sambhal has long been contested, with Hindu groups claiming it was constructed on the ruins of the Harihar temple in 1529.

A local court ordered the survey after a Hindu priest in November claimed the mosque was built on the temple site.

Nearly 1,000 Muslim protesters gathered outside the mosque in a bid to block surveyors from Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) from entering to investigate the claims.

The court's swift authorisation for the survey has exacerbated tensions between Hindus and Muslims. A judicial inquiry commission is now probing the circumstances surrounding the violence.

Amid the incident in Sambhal, a petition was filed in court by a right-wing Hindu group in Rajasthan claiming that the Ajmer Sharif Dargah, a Sufi tomb, was built on the site of a Hindu temple.

Politics and religion closely intertwined

Opposition parties have suggested political motives behind the disputes, rather than genuine historical inquiries.

Some Hindu activist groups, which are often linked to BJP , have claimed that several mosques in India were built over Hindu temples centuries ago during the Mughal empire.

"The governance of the ruling BJP and its ideological mentor, RSS, is weakening the rule of law in the country," Asaduddin Owaisi, Chief of the All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen told DW.

RSS is a Hindu umbrella group that advocates a Hindu nationalist agenda. It provided the ideological inspiration for the BJP.

Owaisi pointed out that the Ajmer Sharif Dargah is 800 years old and many non-Muslims also worship there.

Owaisi added that India's 1991 Places of Worship Act was passed to preserve secular character and prevent communal conflicts. Its aim is to preserve worship sites as they were on 15 August, 1947, India's Independence Day.

Legal disputes over religious sites intensify

Despite this legal framework designed to protect religious sites from being contested based on historical claims, courts have increasingly entertained petitions challenging this status.

Over the past few years, there have been efforts by Hindu nationalists to challenge the status of mosques across the country by asserting that they were originally temples destroyed by Muslim rulers.

There is currently a debate about the centuries-old Gyanvapi mosque in Varanasi, one of Hinduism's holiest cities, which is mired in legal battles.

The status of the Mathura Shahi Idgah mosque in Mathura is also embroiled in a legal dispute.

Similarly, the 13th-century Bhojshala-Kamal Maula complex in Madhya Pradesh has become the latest site for an ASI scientific survey. The action followed a Madhya Pradesh High Court ruling, which ordered the ASI to conduct a survey of the premises as the complex is contested by Hindus and Muslims, who call it Vagdevi temple and Kamal Maula Mosque, respectively.Similar claims have also been made about other historical sites, such as the Qutub Minar, a 13th-century minaret and UNESCO World Heritage Site in New Delhi, further fueling tensions.

Sambhal Mosque has long been contested, with Hindus claiming it was constructed on the ruins of the Harihar temple in 1529 **PHOTO: PTI**

The example of Ayodhya Temple

Last year, Modi inaugurated the Ram temple in Ayodhya, built on the site of the Babri mosque that had been similarly contested as a holy site for Hindus. The mosque was torn down by Hindu extremists in 1992 and a temple later constructed in its place.

The success of the campaign to build a temple in Ayodhya has been seen as rousing Hindu claims for a growing number of mosques across the country to be demolished to make way for Hindu temples.

Two years ago, S Eshwarappa, a former deputy chief minister of Karnataka, claimed that at least 36,000 temples had been destroyed to build mosques during the time when Muslim emperors ruled India.

He said that they would all be reclaimed legally. Shazia Ilmi, a national spokesperson for the BJP, told DW that stoking temple-mosque disputes goes against the grain of the plan "Developed India 2047" — a pledge to make India a fully developed economy by its independence centenary.

"We cannot hark back to the past but must move on. Ironically, the Ajmer shrine is visited by thousands of devotees cutting across religious divides every day," said Ilmi. *—DW News*

PHOTO: FB

1,300km asteroid passes by Earth, no threat detected

WASHINGTON, 3 DEC

NASA has confirmed that a massive asteroid named 447755 (2007 JX2) passed by Earth on 3 December at 4.46am IST. Measuring about 1,300m in size and travelled at an incredible speed of 44,000 km/h, the asteroid came within 5.5 million km of Earth—more than 14 times the distance from Earth to the Moon. Despite its size and speed, NASA assured there is no threat to our planet. The asteroid is being closely monitored through NASA's Asteroid Watch Dashboard, which tracks its speed, direction, and distance. Close encounters with such large asteroids are rare, occurring once every 5 to 10 years. Despite no immediate risk, NASA rigorously monitors such Near-Earth Objects (NEOs) to assess potential threats.

—Agencies

Vietnamese tycoon faces death in largest fraud case

HANOI, 3 DEC

The death sentence for real estate tycoon Truong My Lan was upheld Tuesday in Vietnam's largest fraud case, the scale of which had raised concerns about the country's economy. She had been convicted in April of embezzlement and bribery over the fraud amounting to USD 12.5 billion, nearly 3 per cent of Vietnam's 2022 GDP. As chairperson of the Van Thinh Phat real estate firm, Lan illegally controlled Saigon Joint Stock Commercial Bank between 2012 and 2022 and allowed 2,500 loans that cost the bank USD 27 billion in losses. The court in Ho Chi Minh rejected her appeal against the conviction while adding that her death sentence could be commuted to life if she reimburses three-fourth of the losses, working out to around USD 11 billion, state media reported.*—PTI*

Impeachment case filed against Philippines VP

MANILA, 3 DEC

An impeachment complaint has been lodged against Sara Duterte, the current Vice President of the Philippines, by former military officers from the group Magdalo. The complaint fuels tension between Duterte and President Ferdinand Marcos Jr., highlighting significant differences in their stances on China's territorial claims in the South China Sea and the controversial anti-drug policies initiated by Duterte's father, Rodrigo Duterte. Notably, the complaint alleges that Sara Duterte failed to condemn Chinese aggression towards Philippine forces, although it does not specifically mention China.*—PTI*

3 climbers from US, Canada go missing on NZ's Aoraki peak

WELLINGTON, 3 DEC

Three climbers from the US and Canada have gone missing after failing to return from an ascent of Aoraki, New Zealand's highest peak. The missing Americans, Kurt Blair, 56, from Colorado, and Carlos Romero, 50, from California, are experienced alpine guides, while the identity of the Canadian climber has not been disclosed pending family notification. The trio flew to a hut partway up the mountain on Saturday for their climb but were reported missing on Monday when they did not meet their arranged transport. Authorities found several climbing items believed to belong to the missing climbers, but no sign of them has been located. Search efforts were halted on Tuesday due to worsening weather conditions, including heavy rain and snowfall, with operations unlikely to resume until Thursday when conditions are expected to improve. *—PTI*

Israel strikes kill 11 in Lebanon amid truce

Lebanon says Israel violated truce over 50 times

Israeli soldiers look at a destroyed part of Gaza City from their position at the Israel-Gaza border PHOTO: PTI

JERUSALEM, 3 DEC

Israel unleashed its largest wave of airstrikes across Lebanon since agreeing to a ceasefire with Hezbollah last week, killing at least 11 people on Monday after the Lebanese militant group fired a volley of projectiles as a warning over what it said were Israeli truce violations.

The projectiles were apparently the first time that Hezbollah took aim at Israeli forces after the 60-day ceasefire went into effect last Wednesday.

Hezbollah said in a statement that it fired on an Israeli military position in the area as a "defensive and warning response" after what it called "repeated violations" of the ceasefire deal by Israel. It said complaints to mediators tasked with monitoring the ceasefire "were futile in stopping these violations."

Before the Hezbollah projectiles, Israeli carried out at least four airstrikes and an artillery barrage in southern Lebanon, including a drone strike that killed a person on a motorcycle, according to Lebanese state media. Another strike killed a corporal in the Lebanese security services.

Lebanon's parliament speaker, Nabih Berri, accused Israel of violating the truce more than 50 times in recent days by launching airstrikes, demolishing homes near the border and violating Lebanon's airspace.

Palestinian officials say Fatah and Hamas are closing in on an agreement to appoint a committee of politically independent technocrats to administer the Gaza Strip after the war. It would effectively end Hamas' rule and could help advance ceasefire talks with Israel.

The rival factions have made several failed attempts to reconcile since Hamas seized power in Gaza in 2007. Israel has meanwhile ruled out any postwar role in Gaza for either Hamas or Fatah, which dominates the Western-backed Palestinian Authority.

Trump warns Hamas over captives' release

WASHINGTON, 3 DEC

In United States, President-elect Donald Trump demanded the immediate release of Israeli hostages held by Hamas in Gaza, saying on social media that if they are not freed before he takes office in January there would be "HELL TO PAY."

It was not immediately clear whether Trump was threatening to directly involve the US military. The US has given Israel crucial military and diplomatic support throughout the nearly 15-month conflict.

Trump called for Palestinian militants to free all of the roughly 100 Israeli hostages still held inside Gaza. *—PTI*

Americans will suffer if 25% tariffs are imposed: Trudeau to Trump

TORONTO, 3 DEC

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau told Donald Trump that Americans would also suffer if the president-elect follows through on a plan to impose sweeping tariffs on Canadian products, a Canadian minister who attended their recent dinner said Monday.

Trump threatened to impose tariffs on products from Canada and Mexico if they don't stop what he called the flow of drugs and migrants across their borders with the United States. He said on social media last week that he would impose a 25% tax on all products entering the U.S. from Canada and Mexico as one of his first executive orders.

Canadian Public Safety Minister Dominic LeBlanc, whose responsibilities include border security, attended a dinner with Trump and Trudeau at Trump's Mar-a-Lago club on Friday.

Trudeau requested the meeting in a bid to avoid the tariffs by convincing Trump that the northern border is nothing like the US southern border with Mexico.

If Trump makes good on his threat to slap 25 per cent tariffs on everything imported from Mexico and Canada, the price increases that could follow will collide with his campaign promise to give American families a break from inflation.

Economists say companies would have little choice but to pass along the added costs, dramatically raising prices for food, clothing, automobiles, alcohol and other goods. *—PTI*

Justin Trudeau PHOTO: PTI

- Economists say companies would have little choice but to pass along the added costs, dramatically raising prices for food, clothing, automobiles, alcohol and other goods.

TRUMP TO ATTEND NOTRE DAME'S REOPENING

WASHINGTON, 3 DEC

US President-elect Donald Trump is set to visit Paris this weekend for the reopening of the historic Notre Dame Cathedral, which has undergone extensive restoration following a devastating fire in April 2019.

In a statement on Truth Social, Trump praised French President Emmanuel Macron for his efforts in restoring the cathedral, calling it a "wonderful job." . The main reopening service will be presided over by the Archbishop of Paris, attended by Trump, Macron, and various dignitaries. The inaugural Mass is scheduled for 8 December at 10.30am.

] Meanwhile, Trump appointed billionaire investment banker Warren Stephens as the United States' ambassador to the Court of St James, a significant diplomatic role for the prominent Republican donor, who contributed $2 million to PAC this year. *—PTI*

$224 MILLION LOSS

30 killed, many displaced amid floods in Malaysia & Thailand

KOTA BHARU, 3 DEC

Devastating floods triggered by monsoon rains have resulted in over 30 fatalities and the displacement of tens of thousands across Malaysia and southern Thailand, officials reported on Tuesday. With further heavy rainfall anticipated, both nations are mobilising to set up shelters and evacuation plans.

Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim announced that the heavy rainfall experienced last week, lasting five days, equated to the total rainfall over the previous six months. The northeastern states of Kelantan and Terengganu faced significant destruction, with roads and homes severely damaged. Rescue teams utilised boats to deliver food to those trapped in their residences. Anwar estimated that repairs to the flood-damaged infrastructure could cost the government around 1 billion ringgit (USD 224 million).

While rainfall abated over the weekend, the Meteorological Department warned of renewed heavy showers expected later on Tuesday. Anwar indicated that a further monsoon surge could impact the region on Sunday.

According to the National Disaster Command Centre, approximately 91,000 individuals across eight states are currently housed in schools and community relief centres, a decrease from 150,000 on Sunday, with the majority of evacuees from Kelantan and Terengganu.

In southern Thailand, the situation is dire, with the Department of Disaster Prevention and Mitigation reporting 25 deaths and over 300,000 households affected. *—PTI*

Children rest outside their house damaged by flood in Tumpat, on the outskirts of Kota Bahru, Malaysia, on Tuesday PHOTO: PTI

US to send Ukraine $725M worth drone systems, mines

PHOTO: X@MOHAMMADJAHANS

WASHINGTON, 3 DEC

The US is preparing to send Ukraine an additional USD 725 million in military assistance, including counter-drone systems and munitions for its High Mobility Artillery Rocket System, which could indicate more of the longer-range missiles are headed to the battlefield.

It was unclear whether the munitions for the HIMARS are the coveted ATACMS — the Army Tactical Missile System — but Ukraine has been pressing for more of the longer-range missiles to strike additional targets inside Russia.

The package, announced Monday by the State Department, also includes more of the anti-personnel land mines that Ukraine is counting on to slow Russian and North Korean ground forces in Russia's Kursk region.

President Joe Biden has pledged to spend all of the military assistance funds Congress approved this year for Ukraine before the end of his administration on 20 January, which before Monday's announcement included about USD 7.1 billion in weapons that would be drawn from the Pentagon's stockpiles.

There is widespread speculation about what the new Trump administration will mean for Ukraine as the incoming president has promised to end the conflict. In a major shift, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy signaled on Friday that an an offer of NATO membership to territory under Kyiv's control could end "the hot stage of the war." *—PTI*

Data cable across Sweden-Finland damaged

BERLIN, 3 DEC

A data cable running across the land border between Sweden and Finland has been damaged, local Swedish media reported on Tuesday.

Swedish newspaper Dagens Nyheter said the cable was damaged in two separate places on Finnish territory,

Over 6,000 private customers and about 100 business customers were affected by the damage.

The incident comes after the rupture of two data cables on the Baltic Sea bed last month. The two, one running from Finland to Germany and the other from Lithuania to Sweden, were both damaged in Swedish waters.

Finnish, Swedish and German authorities have launched investigations.

Germany said the damage appeared to have been caused by sabotage.

Last week, Sweden formally asked China to cooperate in explaining the rupture of the Baltic Sea data cables where a China-flagged vessel had been sighted. *—PTI*

Blinken heads to final NATO meet under Biden

Washington, 3 Dec

Secretary of State Antony Blinken is heading back to Europe on Monday for what will likely be the last high-level NATO meeting before the Biden administration leaves office next month. Shoring up allied support for Ukraine ahead of President-elect Donald Trump's return to the White House in January will top the agenda at NATO foreign ministers meetings in Brussels on Tuesday and Wednesday, according to the State Department. Outgoing President Joe Biden will not be in power when NATO leaders gather for their next summit in June.

US puts more China firms under export controls

Bangkok, 3 Dec

The US Commerce Department has expanded the list of Chinese technology companies subject to export controls to include many that make equipment used to make computer chips, chipmaking tools and software. The 140 companies newly included in the so-called "entity list" are nearly all based in China. But some are Chinese-owned businesses in Japan, South Korea and Singapore. China's Commerce Ministry protested and said it would act to protect its "rights and interests," without giving any details.

Musk's $56bn Tesla pay deal junked by US

UNITED STATES, 3 DEC

A US judge has once again declined to approve Elon Musk's $56 billion pay package as CEO of Tesla, despite shareholders voting to restore it. The ruling from Chancellor Kathaleen St. Jude McCormick of Delaware's Court of Chancery reaffirmed her earlier decision to void the compensation deal, determining that Tesla's board had not adequately protected shareholder interests due to their close ties with Musk.

McCormick noted that allowing parties to create new facts to overturn judgments would lead to "interminable" lawsuits. She critiqued the arguments presented by Musk's defence team as lacking basis in established law. The judge also highlighted that Tesla had made material misstatements regarding the implications of the shareholder vote to reinstate Musk's pay.

Elon Musk PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA

Following McCormick's initial ruling, a significant number of Tesla shareholders voted to reinstate Musk's package in June. Tesla described the court's decision as "wrong," indicating plans to appeal. Musk also voiced his discontent on X, claiming that shareholders should dictate company votes rather than judges, labelling McCormick an "activist posing as a judge." Under Musk's 2018 compensation plan, he was set to receive stock options tied to the company's performance metrics.

—Courtesy, Al Jazeera

BLEEDING EYES DISEASE KILLS 15 IN RWANDA

KIGALI, 3 DEC

An outbreak of Marburg virus disease (MVD), known as the "bleeding eye virus," has claimed 15 lives and infected at least 66 people in Rwanda as of 29 November, the country's Ministry of Health announced.

MVD, which has gripped fear globally, is caused by the Marburg virus and spread by fruit bats, shares similarities with Ebola and has a high fatality rate, 24-88 per cent. The first case in Rwanda was reported in September. Symptoms include fever, headache, muscle pain, severe diarrhea, and vomiting, often leading to hemorrhaging, including in the eyes.

Death usually occurs 8-9 days after symptoms begin due to severe blood loss and shock. MVD spreads through direct human contact with bodily fluids or contaminated materials and also through caves or mines inhabited by infected bats. There are no approved vaccines or specific treatments; supportive care improves survival. Rwanda Health Minister Sabin Nsanzimana said that Rwanda has received 700 doses of an experimental vaccine from the US-based Sabin Vaccine Institute, with efficacy still uncertain. *—Agencies*

Chinmoy Krishna Das PHOTO: ANI

Hindu monk denied bail in B'desh, hearing adjourned

DHAKA, 3 DEC

Hindu leader Chinmoy Krishna Das faced a setback on Tuesday as his bail hearing in a Bangladesh court was postponed for a month due to the absence of legal representation. Reports indicate that after an initial hearing of the bail petition, Judge Md Saiful Islam of Chattogram Metropolitan Sessions Court rescheduled the next hearing for 2 January.

Das, spokesperson for the Bangladesh Sammilita Sanatani Jagran Jote, has been jailed since his arrest at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in Dhaka on 25 November, accused of sedition. His detention has sparked protests from supporters and heightened security measures in the Chattogram court area, where various security forces were deployed.

Notably, Das was absent from the courtroom during the hearing, and a lawyer was tragically killed amid the unrest following his arrest. Following the denial of bail by the Chattogram court on 26 November, Das's legal team filed a revision petition, but no hearing was conducted on that occasion.

The political landscape in Bangladesh has shifted since the interim government under Muhammad Yunus assumed power. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Rupee recovers from all-time low, rises 3P to 84.69

NEW DELHI, 3 DEC

The rupee recovered from its all-time low level and settled for the day with gains of just 3 paise at 84.69 (provisional) against the US dollar in a range-bound trade on Tuesday, amid a positive trend in domestic equities. Forex traders said the rupee has been on a downtrend largely on the back of Donald Trump's rhetoric on BRICS currency, political instability in the Eurozone, weaker domestic macroeconomic indicators and unabated foreign portfolio outflows. At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened at 84.75 and moved in a narrow range and touched an intra-day high of 84.64 and an all-time low of 84.76 against the greenback. On Monday, the rupee depreciated 12 paise to close at an all-time low of 84.72 against the dollar. *—PTI*

Gold declines ₹200; silver bounces ₹2,400

NEW DELHI, 3 DEC

Gold prices extended losses for the second straight day after declining Rs 200 to Rs 79,000 per 10 grams in the national capital on Tuesday, according to the All India Sarafa Association. The yellow metal of 99.9 per cent purity on Monday settled at Rs 79,200 per 10 grams. However, silver prices surged Rs 2,400 to Rs 92,400 per kg against the previous close of Rs 90,000 per kg. The bullish sentiment in the silver market is primarily driven by industrial demand, traders said. Prices of gold of 99.5 per cent purity slipped Rs 200 to Rs 78,600 per 10 grams. It closed at Rs 78,800 per 10 grams on Monday. Silver contracts for March delivery advanced Rs 1,251 or 1.38 per cent to Rs 92,061 per kg. Globally, Comex gold futures climbed USD 7.40 per ounce. *—PTI*

India records 92K patent applications in FY'24

NEW DELHI, 3 DEC

Around 92,000 patent applications were filed in India during the last financial year, signifying India's growing maturity as a hub for technological and scientific development, a top official said on Tuesday. Unnat Pandit, Controller General of Patents, Designs and Trademarks (CGPDTM), also shared that the intellectual property (IP) guidelines are being revamped and inputs are being sought from various stakeholders for the new norms. Pandit highlighted the need to create an IP system which is vibrant. "We are working towards efficient IP filings. This rapid growth in granted patents underscores the efficiency of India's patent office in processing applications. *—PTI*

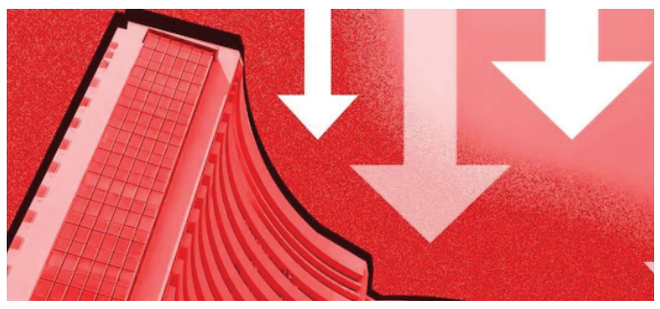
Japanese firms eye semiconductor units in India

NEW DELHI, 3 DEC

Japanese firms are keen to set up semiconductor units in India and they have all the expertise and specialisation to partner with domestic firms, Deloitte has said. It also said that skilled workforce, funds and continuation of support measures are key to push growth of the semiconductor sector in India. Japanese firms are "super enthusiastic" about India, Shingo Kamaya, Deloitte AP and SRT Leader, Deloitte Japan said. In July, Japan became the second Quad partner after the US to sign an agreement with India for the joint development of the semiconductor ecosystem and maintain the resilience of its global supply chain. India aspires to have 10 semiconductor manufacturing plants in 10 years. *—PTI*

ITC, VST Industries shares decline amid GST hike report

Final decision on GST rate will be taken on 21 December



The hike was increased to 35% from present 28% PHOTO: PTI

NEW DELHI, 3 DEC

Shares of ITC, Varun Beverages and Godfrey Phillips India ended lower on Tuesday after the Group of Ministers on GST rate rationalisation decided to hike tax on sin goods like aerated beverages, cigarettes, tobacco and related products to 35 per cent from the present 28 per cent.

The stock of ITC declined 1.02 per cent to settle at Rs 472.30 on the BSE. During the day, it went lower by 3 per cent to Rs 462.80.

VST Industries' stock dipped 2.27 per cent to Rs 318.30 in intra day but recovered the lost ground and ended at Rs 327.90, up 0.68 per cent.

Shares of Varun Beverages dropped 1.86 per cent to settle at Rs 621 apiece after tumbling 5.18 per cent to Rs 600 during the day.

Godfrey Phillips India slipped 1.71 per cent to finish at Rs 5,659.50. Intra-day, it fell 3.16 per cent to Rs 5,575.50.

The Group of Ministers (GoM) report is expected to be discussed by the GST Council -- chaired by Union Finance Minister and comprising her state counterparts – on 21 December. A final decision on GST rate changes will be taken by the council. *—PTI*

MKTS RALLY FOR 3RD DAY AMID BUYING IN BLUE-CHIP STOCKS

MUMBAI,3 DEC

PHOTO: PTI

Benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty rallied for the third straight session on Tuesday amid buying in blue-chip stocks like HDFC Bank, Reliance Industries and firm trends in global markets.

The BSE benchmark Sensex jumped 597.67 points or 0.74 per cent to settle at 80,845.75. During the day, it surged 701.02 points or 0.87 per cent to 80,949.10.

The NSE Nifty went up by 181.10 points or 0.75 per cent to 24,457.15.

From the 30-share Sensex pack, Adani Ports surged nearly 6 per cent. NTPC, Axis Bank, State Bank of India, Larsen & Toubro, UltraTech Cement, Tata Motors, HDFC Bank and Reliance Industries were the other big gainers.

Bharti Airtel, ITC, Sun Pharma, Asian Paints and Kotak Mahindra Bank were the laggards.

In Asian markets, Seoul, Tokyo, Shanghai and Hong Kong settled higher. European markets were trading in green.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 238.28 crore on Monday, while Domestic Institutional Investors (DIIs) bought shares worth Rs 3,588.66 crore, according to exchange data. Global oil benchmark Brent crude climbed 1.13 per cent to USD 72.64 a barrel. *—PTI*

SAYS BERNSTEIN

Adani group stronger financially after Hindenburg

NEW DELHI, 3 DEC

PHOTO: PTI

Ports-to-energy Adani group is better off financially now than at the time when it was under attack from short-seller Hindenburg, US-based research firm Bernstein said citing dramatic drop in shares pledged by promoters and low leverage.

The last big event for the group was in January 2023 when Hindenburg accused it of accounting and financial fraud, and the latest one happened on November 21 when US authorities filed an indictment against the founder chairman of the conglomerate Gautam Adani and key aides in a bribery related case.

Adani Group had repeatedly denied all charges in the Hindenburg report as well as the ones brought by the US authorities last month.

Bernstein in a report said it is presenting a top-down view on how the groups leverage, share-pledges, debt-repayment and relative valuations have evolved in the last two years to assess whether the risks are lower than earlier.

The group is now in a much stronger position with no share-pledges, low leverage, debt repayments and improved valuations.

A key concern during the short-seller event last year was the share pledge of the group-across assets. The fear was that the group has pledged these shares to raise money which has been invested as equity in new businesses, hence a tight liquidity environment for the group could lead to a domino effect.

On debt, it said, Adani group has diversified their funding sources over the years - reducing reliance on domestic banks and raising money from bonds. *—PTI*

IPO subscriptions drop amid weak mkt

MUMBAI, 3 DEC

PHOTO: ANI

The initial public offering (IPO) market of the country has seen a slowdown in subscriptions over the past two months, driven by weak market sentiment and disappointing listing performances, says a report by Axis Capital.

The report highlighted that the investors appear to be exercising caution, reflecting a shift in confidence toward new market entrants.

It said, "A mix of disappointing IPO listing and a sharp decline in market sentiments has resulted in reduction in IPO subscription in last 2 months."

The report stated that during the current financial year (FY2024), 54 IPOs have been listed, of which 38 are trading above their issue price, suggesting a mixed performance.

It added that the historical data from July 2020 to November 2024 provides a broader view, out of 252 IPOs launched during this period, 186 were initially listed above their issue price, 10 at their issue price, and 67 below it.

The decline reflected broader market challenges, with subdued investor sentiment impacting valuations. This trend has dampened enthusiasm for new IPOs, as investors have become more selective about where to allocate funds.

While the long-term performance of IPOs remains promising for many, the recent slowdown underlines the importance of stabilising market conditions to restore investor confidence. *—PTI*

RBI urges banks to launch campaigns for frozen accounts

MUMBAI, 3 DEC

Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has directed banks to take immediate steps to reduce the number of inoperative or frozen accounts and to make the activation process smoother and more hassle-free.

To achieve this, the RBI has advised banks to organise special campaigns focused on activating inoperative or frozen accounts.

Additionally, banks have been encouraged to facilitate Aadhaar updates for customers at branches that provide Aadhaar-related services. This initiative aims to assist account holders, particularly those from underprivileged sections of society, in reactivating accounts with ease.

These steps are part of RBI's broader efforts to improve financial inclusion and reduce barriers for marginalised sections of society in accessing banking services. Banks have been urged to act urgently and ensure convenience in resolving account-related issues. *—ANI*

Domestic air traffic to rise to 164-170 million in FY25: Icra

NEW DELHI, 3 DEC

The international passenger traffic growth for Indian carriers increased and stood at 16.2 per cent PHOTO: PTI

Domestic air traffic is projected to rise 7-10 per cent to 164-170 million in the current fiscal year, while the aviation industry's loss is pegged at Rs 2,000-3,000 crore during the same period, according to rating agency Icra.

In the first half of 2024-25, Icra said domestic air passenger traffic stood at 79.3 million, marking a 5.3 per cent annual growth that was partly impacted by the severe heat wave and other weather-related disruptions.

The international passenger traffic growth for Indian carriers increased and stood at 16.2 per cent in the first half of the current financial year.

On Tuesday, the rating agency said domestic air traffic is expected to jump 7-10 per cent on an annual basis to 164-170 million in FY2025.

Icra maintained a 'stable' outlook on the Indian aviation industry, amidst continued growth in domestic and international air passenger traffic.

Airlines' cost structure is typically driven by two key components -- Aviation Turbine Fuel (ATF) prices and the INR-USD movement.

On a year-on-year basis, Icra said average ATF prices eased by 6.8 per cent to Rs 96,192/KL in the first eight months of FY2025, though exceeding the levels seen during pre-Covid period (first eight months of FY2020) of Rs 65,261/KL.

Fuel costs account for around 30 to 40 per cent of an airline's costs, while about 35-50 per cent of the operating expenses, including aircraft lease payments, fuel expenses and a significant portion of aircraft and engine maintenance expenses are denominated in dollar terms. *—PTI*

WILL RBI GUV DAS GET TENURE EXTENSION AMID Q2 GDP REPORT?

The question of whether Shaktikanta Das, the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) Governor, will receive an extension is being raised, following a weaker-than-expected Q2 GDP performance. While the RBI had projected a positive outlook, the disappointing growth figures are causing concern. With Das' term nearing its end, experts speculate whether this could affect his future, as the economic performance during his tenure is under scrutiny. *—Agencies*

'Sports sector vital for economic growth'

NEW DELHI, 3 DEC

The government should focus on developing a model to leverage the sports industry for economic growth and frame policies to encourage more investment in sports infrastructure, events, and related goods and services, according to a report.

The Nangia Nxt- FICCI Knowledge Report, titled 'Future of Sports in India,' also suggested that the government could provide incentives to the private sector to fund large-scale, holistic sports programmes to support talent development as part of their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities.

CSR contributions could be leveraged to establish and run high-performance training centres with facilities, including international coaches, nutritionists, and mental and physical trainers.

While the sports industry has seen remarkable advancements, challenges such as financial insecurity for athletes, underutilised infrastructure, and the need for greater inclusivity persist.

Expanding financial aid programmes, developing robust career transition pathways, and fostering a culture of inclusivity can address these issues, the report said.

The report also suggested that the government must actively bid for and host international competitions and sporting events.

It may also diversify sports offerings in multiple states by promoting winter and traditional sports, thereby also encouraging sports tourism.

Sectors such as sports goods, apparel, and media rights are contributing significantly to this growth, with the sports media market alone expected to grow from USD 1 billion in 2020 to USD 13.4 billion by 2027. *—PTI*

In Q2, Swiggy's loss falls to ₹625.53 cr

NEW DELHI, 3 DEC

Food and grocery delivery platform Swiggy on Tuesday reported a narrowing of loss at Rs 625.53 crore on a consolidated basis in the second quarter ended September, down from Rs 657 crore in the year-ago period.

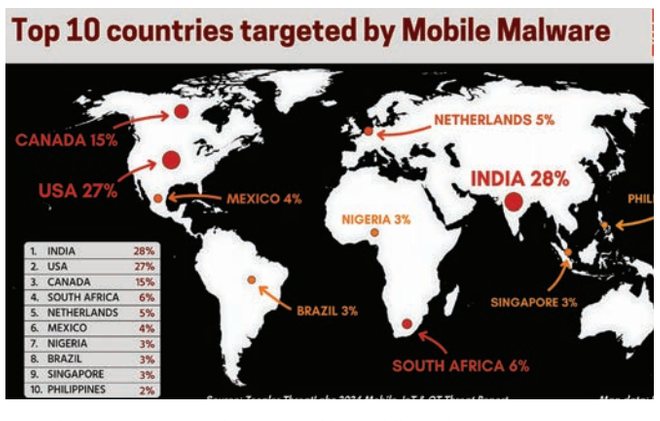
The company is declaring its quarterly results to the stock exchanges for the first time since it went public.

Swiggy's revenue from operations increased to Rs 3,601.45 crore in the July-September quarter, from Rs 2,763.33 crore in the corresponding period of last year. *—PTI*

ZSCALER REPORT

India leads in global mobile malware attacks

NEW DELHI, 3 DEC



Map shows top 10 countries targeted by Mobile Malware PHOTO: PTI

In a startling revelation, India now tops the list for mobile malware attacks globally, surpassing the United States and Canada, with a disappointing step-up from its previous third-place ranking, according to a report.

The Zscaler ThreatLabz 2024 Mobile, IoT, and OT Threat Report analysed a dataset comprising over 20 billion threat-related mobile transactions and associated cyber threats, between June 2023 to May 2024.

"India has become the top global target for mobile malware attacks, accounting for 28 per cent of the total, surpassing the United States (27.3 per cent) and Canada (15.9 per cent). This significant jump from its 3rd place ranking last year underscores the critical need for Indian enterprises to adopt robust security measures, especially amid the rapid digital transformation and increasing cyber threats," the report said.

With nearly half of mobile attacks being trojans (malware that tricks users into downloading and running malicious software), the financial sector is particularly vulnerable.

The report revealed a 29 per cent increase in banking malware attacks and a staggering 111 per cent rise in mobile spyware attacks.

Phishing attempts targeting mobile customers of major Indian banks, such as HDFC, ICICI, and Axis banks, have increased, according to ThreatLabz analysts.

These clever attacks deceive mobile users into disclosing critical bank information by using phoney banking websites that closely mimic the real ones, it said.

The report also indicated a concerning global trend, with over 200 malicious applications discovered on the Google Play Store and a 45 per cent year-over-year increase in IoT malware transactions, underscoring the pervasive nature of cyber threats today.

On a positive note, India has improved its ranking as a malware origin point, moving from 5th to 7th place in the APAC (Asia–Pacific) region. *—PTI*

'Additional steel duty to impact MSME exports'

NEW DELHI, 3 DEC

MSME exporters from the engineering sector on Tuesday said that any move to impose additional duties on steel imports would make domestic products uncompetitive and impact the country's outbound shipments from the sector.

Federation of Indian Export Organisations (FIEO) Director General Ajay Sahai said that if the government imposes additional duty, they should ensure that the domestic steel companies do not increase the prices of the inputs.

The steel ministry has proposed for a 25 per cent safeguard duty on import of certain steel items into the country. The proposal came at a meeting between Union Minister of Steel H D Kumaraswamy and Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal here on December 2.

Domestic steel players are raising concerns over rising cheap steel imports from select nations like China.

Think tank Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI) in its report has claimed that thousands of containers carrying imported steel remain stranded at JNPT and other ports due to complex clearance procedures imposed by the Ministry of Steel (MOS).

India's steel imports are neither excessive nor unwarranted, GTRI Founder Ajay Srivastava said, adding half of these imports are critical raw materials for domestic production, while 40 per cent consist of specialised items that India does not produce in sufficient quantities. *—PTI*

PHOTO: X

Todd appointed new Cricket Australia CEO

MELBOURNE, 3 DEC

Former National Rugby League boss Todd Greenberg will succeed Nick Hockley as the chief executive officer of Cricket Australia next year, the governing body announced on Tuesday. Green, who is the current chief executive officer of the Australian Cricketers' Association, will assume the role from March. Hockley, who was appointed in 2020 initially on an interim basis, had announced in August that he would step down from the post at the end of the current domestic season. Greenberg has previously worked with Cricket New South Wales. A top-order batter, he played 10 seasons for Randwick CC in Sydney.—*PTI*

PHOTO: X

Long-time Davis Cup captain Neale Fraser dies aged 91

MELBOURNE, 3 DEC

Neale Fraser, who won three Grand Slam singles titles and guided Australia to four Davis Cup titles during a 24-year career as team captain, has died at 91. Tennis Australia released a statement Tuesday saying the sport "has lost one of its giants." Fraser beat Australian tennis great Rod Laver to win Wimbledon in 1960, in between sweeps at the U.S. Open where he won the singles, men's doubles, and mixed titles in 1959 and '60. He won 11 major men's doubles titles, including at least two at each of the four Grand Slam tournaments. He helped Australia win four consecutive Davis Cup titles as a player and rejected lucrative offers to turn professional in a bid to succeed Harry Hopman as the national team captain.—*PTI*

Budimir continued his scoring streak to help Osasuna draw

SEVILLE, 3 DEC

Ante Budimir continued his scoring streak to help Osasuna draw at Sevilla 1-1 in La Liga on Monday. Osasuna cut the gap to the top four to three points. Sevilla was just four points further back. The match struggled to spark into life but Budimir broke the deadlock in the 69th minute when he headed in a cross from Jesus Areso. It was Budimir's ninth goal in his past 10 league matches. However, Osasuna's lead lasted just three minutes. Dodi Lukebakio latched onto a ball over the top from substitute Saúl and rounded goalkeeper Sergio Herrera to fire in the equalizer.—*PTI*

Mehidy's blitz lead B'desh to a 211-run lead over WI

KINGSTON, 3 DEC

Bangladesh turned an 18-run first-innings lead against the West Indies into a competitive 211-run advantage on day three Monday of the second test at Sabina Park. Bangladesh defended its first-innings 164 by bowling out the host for 146 just after lunch. Fast bowler Nahid Rana took his maiden test five-for. As the pitch started to ease up in the sun, the Bangladeshis batted with unexpected boldness, especially Mehidy Hasan Miraz and Shadman Islam, and grabbed a handy lead at 193-5 when bad light ended play. Captain Mehidy's counterattacking of 42 off 39 balls consolidated Bangladesh's renewed confidence in tying the two-test series. Shahadat Hossain was dropped on 18 but the damage was limited.—*PTI*

Cook praises India for being brave in BGT opener

Bumrah came up with a magnificent performance

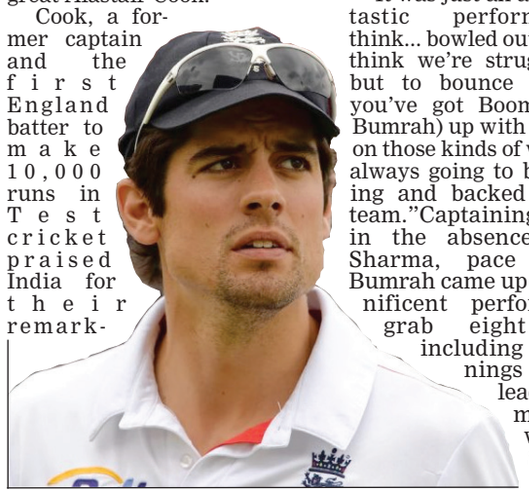
LONDON, 3 DEC

Opting to go in without a proven performer like R Ashwin and batting first in an opening Test of a high-pressure series in Australia are reflections of an Indian team that is brave and supremely confident in its ability to win from any situation, feels England's all-time great Alastair Cook.

Cook, a former captain and the first England batter to make 10,000 runs in Test cricket praised India for their remarkable comeback after getting bowled out for just 150 in the first Test at Perth."I thought India was so brave.

He added, "I think most captains would have bowled first, certainly would have done, and probably got the end of a bad result, like normally in Australia. But India took it on brilliantly.

It was just an all-round fantastic performance."You think... bowled out for 150, you think we're struggling here, but to bounce back when you've got Boomer (Jasprit Bumrah) up with the new ball on those kinds of wickets, he's always going to be outstanding and backed up by the team."Captaining the team in the absence of Rohit Sharma, pace spearhead Bumrah came up with a magnificent performance to grab eight wickets, including a first-innings five-for, to lead India to a memorable win. Speaking about India's move to exclude the senior off-spinner Ashwin from the playing XI, Cook said, "... Just think of how brave they were.



Gilchrist asks Labuschagne to stay longer at crease against Bumrah

The legendary Adam Gilchrist has advised the beleaguered Australian batters to stay longer at the crease to nullify the threat posed by the Jasprit Bumrah-led Indian bowling attack in the pink-ball second Test here. The swashbuckling former keeper-batter also backed the out-of-sorts Marnus Labuschagne to regain form. After Bumrah scythed through the Australian batting line-up, taking eight wickets including a five-for in the first innings at Perth, Gilchrist advised the hosts to "weather the storm". —*PTI*

New Zealand drops to fifth in table

New Zealand's aspirations of qualifying for the World Test Championship Final suffered a setback after they were docked three penalty points due to a slow over-rate against England leading to a drop to 5th in table, the ICC stated on Tuesday. The deduction is welcome news for India, who enjoy pole position with 61.11 percentage points. New Zealand now has a points percentage of 47.92 percent and can only move as high as 55.36 percent with victories from their remaining two fixtures against England.

JUNIOR ASIA CUP TITLE

India women's team heads to Oman, eyes WC qualification

Indian junior women's hockey team PHOTO: PTI

BENGALURU, 3 DEC

The Indian junior women's hockey team departed for Muscat on Tuesday to defend its Asia Cup title which would also help the side qualify for next year's FIH Junior World Cup.

The Junior Asia Cup is scheduled to be held from December 7 to 15 and India will begin their campaign against Bangladesh on Sunday. The top three teams in the showpiece will cut the World Cup scheduled in Santiago, Chile.

India will be up against China, Malaysia, Thailand, and Bangladesh in Pool A while Pool B will feature South Korea, Japan, Chinese Taipei, Hong Kong, and Sri Lanka.

India's campaign will be spearheaded by captain Jyoti Singh along with vice-captain Sakshi Rana and the squad also features players who have had the experience of playing with the senior side.

These players are Vaishnavi Vitthal Phalke, Sunelita Toppo, Mumtaz Khan, Deepika, and Beauty Dungdung. The team is being coached by former India captain Tushar Khandker. "We are very confident and upbeat about our campaign. We have a good, experienced team. We have worked hard over the past few months —*PTI*

SYED MUSHTAQ ALI TROPHY

Surya and Shivam smash it for Mumbai

HYDERABAD, 3 DEC

India's T20 skipper Suryakumar Yadav smashed 70 off 46 balls in his first appearance in the 2024 Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy while Shivam Dube capped his return from a three-month-long injury lay-off with a scintillating 37-ball-71 as Mumbai outplayed Services by 39 runs in a Group E match here on Tuesday.

Batting first, Mumbai scored 192 for 4 riding on the 130-run fourth wicket stand between Surya and Dube. Between the duo, they smashed 11 sixes with Dube enjoying the lion's share.

Surya also hit seven boundaries while Dube had a couple of fours to his credit. Surya's hits were primarily on the on-side with one six over long-on, a couple towards deep mid-wicket region, and one behind square.Both batters were severe on off-spinner Nitin Tanwar who went for 54 in his four overs.

In reply, Services were all out for 153 in 19.3 overs with Shardul Thakur redeeming himself with figures of 4/25. Left-arm spinner Shams Mulani also chipped in with three wickets. Dube won the Player of the Match award after also getting a wicket. For Shardul, after attaining the ignominy of the highest runs conceded in a full spell of Mushtaq Ali Trophy during the previous game against Kerala, this was a morale-boosting performance.

Shami plays sixth match in 11 days, bowls 15 dots Mohammed Shami bowled 15 dot deliveries in his sixth consecutive SMAT T20 match while unheralded Karan Lal smoked 94 in just 47 balls as Bengal hammered Bihar by nine wickets in a Group A match in Rajkot. Bihar without their teen prodigy Vaibhav Suryavanshi, managed 147 for 6 in 20 overs with Sayan Ghosh (2/32) being the pick of the bowlers. Bengal knocked off the chase in just 14 overs with Lal smashing nine fours and six sixes. However, all eyes were on Shami, who was economical once again with figures of 1/18 in 4 overs after 0/16 in 4 against Meghalaya.

Shami has now played six T20 games in 11 days and bowled 23.3 overs out of a maximum of 24 overs. Brief Scores: Mumbai 192/4 (Suryakumar Yadav 70, Shivam Dube 71). Services 153 in 19.3 overs (Shardul Thakur 4/25). Mumbai won by 39 runs. —*PTI*

Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy: Suryakumar Yadav and Shivam Dube, Mohammed Shami PHOTO: SCREENGRAB/X

Champions Trophy: Pak's chances dim

KARACHI, 3 DEC

Former spinner Harbhajan Singh reaffirmed his stance by stating that he doesn't "expect" that the Indian team will travel to Pakistan for next year's ICC Champions Trophy. The future of the ICC Champions Trophy has been covered in a veil of uncertainty after India held firm on its stance to not send the men's cricket team to Pakistan. On the other hand, the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) has been persistent about not switching to a hybrid model and hosting the entire tournament in Pakistan.

Harbhajan backed India's stance of not sending the team to Pakistan for the marquee event and told ANI, "I have said this before. I don't think Team India will travel to Pakistan."

"I don't think the situation is suited to go there and play. People in Pakistan love cricket. —*ANI*

WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP

Gukesh squanders advantage to settle for a draw in Game 7

SINGAPORE, 3 DEC

The youngest-ever challenger to the world crown, D Gukesh let go of a very promising position and had to settle for a fourth consecutive draw against defending champion Ding Liren of China in a marathon seventh game of the World Chess Championship here on Tuesday.

The stalemate, which came after five hours and 22 minutes of nerve-wracking play, left both players on an identical tally of 3.5 points each, still shy of four more points to win the championship. The two players signed peace after 72 moves. It turned out to be a tough day in the office again for Liren, who was staring at a losing position for a long time, till Gukesh blundered.

D Gukesh

The Indian, playing white, got a huge advantage but miscalculated to let the Chinese off the hook in what was the longest game of the match thus far.

It was a miraculous save by Liren after getting into what the chess pundits termed as a lost rook and minor piece endgame. Earlier in the day, Gukesh yet again tightened the noose in the opening. He has been the better player when it comes to springing opening surprises.

Moving his knight forward on the first move, the Indian faced the Neo Grunfeld defense from Liren, and as early as the seventh turn, Gukesh came up with a surprise idea.

Norway Chess: Erigaisi to compete in 2025

Grandmaster Arjun Erigaisi, who recently became the second Indian after the legendary Viswanathan Anand to reach the gold-standard ELO rating of 2800, will make his debut at the prestigious Norway Chess tournament next year. Norway Chess 2025 will take place from 26 May to 6 June. —*PTI*

Messi and Ronaldo only World XI nominees from clubs outside Europe

HOOFDDORP, 3 DEC

Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo are still popular and respected by their fellow players even though they no longer play for European clubs.

The 37-year-old Messi and 39-year-old Ronaldo were the only players not with clubs in Europe to be voted on a 26-man shortlist for the World Team of the Year organized by the global players' union FIFPRO on Monday. The other 24 nominees played in the past year with clubs in England, Germany, Spain, and France, though Kylian Mbappé was the only French connection after spending last season at Paris Saint-Germain. No player from any Italian club was selected nor from any club in South America or Africa. Eight players from Real Madrid, including Mbappé, Vinícius Júnior, and Jude Bellingham were on the shortlist, plus seven from Manchester City including Ballon d'Or winner Rodri, Kevin De Bruyne, and Erling Haaland. Lamine Yamal, the 17-year-old from Barcelona who was the breakout star of Spain's European Championship title, also made it in polling by union members worldwide. Messi, in Major League Soccer with Inter Miami, and Ronaldo, in Saudi Arabia with Al-Nassr, will find out on Dec. 9 if they are in the World XI lineup.FIFPRO said the final team will include the highest-polling goalkeeper, plus each of the top three vote-getters among defenders, midfielders, and forwards. —*PTI*

Ranieri welcomed warmly in a first home game

ROME, 3 DEC

On an emotional Serie A night in Rome, Claudio Ranieri returned to the Stadio Olimpico as the home coach and Edoardo Bove received an outpouring of support following his collapse.

When some soccer broke out, Ranieri's Roma lost to Atalanta 2-0.

Atalanta cut the gap on league leader Napoli back to one point after its eighth straight Serie A victory.

Marten de Roon netted the opener in the 69th minute albeit with a huge deflection off Roma defender Zeki Çelik and Nicolò Zaniolo sealed the result in the final minute with his first goal back in Serie A.

Zaniolo, who spent five years at Roma before leaving in 2023, celebrated wildly and was booed equally ferociously. Roma remained two points above the relegation zone. —*PTI*

ASIAN CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Ronaldo-less Al Nassr suffer loss

DUBAI, 3 DEC

Cristiano Ronaldo watched on from the stands as already-qualified Al Nassr lost for the first time in this year's Asian Champions League Elite as they were beaten 2-1 in injury time by Qatar's Al Sadd on Monday. The Portuguese star, 39, was reportedly rested for the fixture in Riyadh given the Saudi club had secured their place in the knockout stages last week, with three rounds of the group phase remaining. Ronaldo scored twice against Al Gharafa, another Qatari side, last time out, and then netted a double again in the Saudi Pro League on Friday.

Al Sadd defeat Al Nassr 2-1 PHOTO: TWITTER

However, the Al Nassr captain was omitted from Stefano Pioli's matchday squad for the visit of Al Sadd.

Ronaldo, who has 15 goals in 18 appearances for his club this season, was spotted at Al Awwal Park sitting alongside his mother Dolores Aveiro, and his partner Georgina Rodriguez.

Al Sadd took the lead eight minutes into the second half through Akram Afif when the reigning AFC Player of the Year raced from the halfway line onto a long ball.

Afif outpaced defender Mohammed Al Fatil and finished low past Brazil goalkeeper Bento.

Al Nassr drew level on 80 minutes, once Brazilian youngster Wesley's low cross was turned into his own goal by Al Sadd defender Romain Saiss.

However, there would be a huge sting in the tail for Al Nassr, when Afif was tripped inside the hosts' penalty area and substitute Adam Ounas converted from the spot in the 99th minute. —*PTI*

Ebenyo, Kebede to defend Tata Steel World 25K crowns

KOLKATA, 3 DEC

Daniel Ebenyo of Kenya and Ethiopia's Sutume Kebede will defend their respective titles at the Tata Steel World 25K, which will be held here on 15 December.

Ebenyo also holds the current event record of 1:11:13 in the men's category, while Kebede holds the women's record with a timing of 1:18:47.

The World Athletics Gold Label 25K race will have some of the world's best athletes taking center stage with an overall prize of USD 142,214.

With equal prize money for men and women winners, the top three winners stand to win USD 15,000, USD 10,000, and USD 7,000 respectively. The runners will be further incentivized by an Event Record Bonus of USD 5,000.

The women's line-up also includes former winner Desi Jisa from Bahrain. She was part of the Bahraini team that took a bronze medal in the World Cross-Country Championships in 2017 and was placed second in the recent Doha (2023) and Seoul (2024) marathons.

"I am always eager to run again in Kolkata and am happy to be part of the Tata Steel World 25K in 2024," said Jisa. —*PTI*